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The Week-end Review

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THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION—The Week-end Review. *Incorporating The New Statesman, The Nation and Athenaeum, Week-end Review.*

NOW that Mussolini has shown that he is as impervious to bribes as to reason the next step is for the League Powers individually to make up their minds what course of action they will sponsor when they meet as a League in September. The British Cabinet has collected for this purpose. The preliminary question of the embargo on arms to Abyssinia should present no problem. The embargo was imposed in defiance of justice in the vain hope of conciliating the Duce. Great Britain will not be in any way infringing the Treaty of 1930 by permitting Abyssinia to make what provision she can against Italian aggression. The second and main question is the procedure which Great Britain is prepared to recommend the League Council to adopt. Presumably Abyssinia's appeal will be considered under Article XI which, in view of a threat of war, binds the League to "take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations." A formal condemnation of Italy as an aggressor would naturally follow, leaving the Council to decide whether or not to resort to sanctions and, if so, which sanctions are appropriate. It will be well in any case for the Italian people, who are far from enthusiastic about this war, to know that the Duce has earned their country the moral reprobation of the whole civilised world. But moral reprobation is unlikely to stop Mussolini.

The Isolationists

The isolationists, among whom we must now include Mr. Garvin, seem strangely ignorant of the nature of the League and of our obligations as signatories of the Covenant. Lord Beaverbrook asks us to tear up this Treaty as cynically as Germany tore up a much less recent and solemn obligation to respect the integrity of Belgium in 1914. These curious isolationists denounce us on the fantastic charge of wanting Great Britain to make war on Italy. It cannot be too strongly repeated that the Covenant demands no unilateral action, and neither we nor any of the newspapers which still retain some respect for England's good name in the world have even suggested anything so dangerous or idiotic. The question of sanctions only arises if the League Council decides that they are necessary as a means of preserving peace after all other methods have failed and Italy has been formally denounced as an aggressor. The Council will then have to decide how far it is prepared to go in applying Article XVI—which sanctions are suitable and which are not. In our leading article we discuss the pros and cons of different types of action as realistically as we can. It seems to us that what the Archbishop of York calls the "indelible disgrace" of allowing Italy to defy the world unchecked is, on mere grounds of expediency, the most dangerous of all courses. Indeed we believe that right leadership at Geneva—and Great Britain cannot avoid leadership of some sort—might transform this crisis into an opportunity for revivifying the League and beginning that realistic effort to remove the causes of war without which it can never have more than a makeshift.

Congress Winding Up

The breakdown in Paris was followed by drastic action in Washington—the immediate passing of a Neutrality Bill. It forbids the supply of war material to belligerent countries, puts all munition firms under licence, and makes possible the closing of American ports to submarines. On the eve of adjournment Congress is indulging in an orgy of legislation. The terms of the new Tax Bill have been nearly settled, so as to make it a very modest measure after all. The Social Security Bill is through; and the differences over the Banking Bill have been compromised, on terms which place open market operations outside the direct control of the Administration, but leave indirect control through the President's power to nominate the members of the Federal Reserve Board. The Mines Bill is still held up, but seems likely to pass despite the denunciations of it as a flouting of the verdict of the Supreme Court against the N.R.A. Only the Public Utilities Bill seems still to be giving serious difficulty; and even over that an adjustment seems likely within a few days. Meanwhile, the New Deal has been faring better in the courts, which have so far left the Agricultural Adjustment Act in working order. Labour is increasingly discontented at the cutting of wages since the N.R.A. Codes came to an end, and at Mr. Roosevelt's firm refusal of their demand for Union rates on work-relief schemes.

Monument or Scaffold?

The internal discord in Germany was thrust on the world's attention by Dr. Schacht's remarkable speech. He is reported to have murmured that he was earning either a monument or a scaffold. He had, of course, to bring his remarks formally within the limits of official orthodoxy and to pretend that those whom he denounced were flouting, and not expressing, the official policy. As the leading spokesman of big business and high finance and the only person who keeps a desperate economic situation from collapse, he is too powerful to be brought to book, however distasteful his words may be to General Göring and Dr. Goebbels or even to Hitler himself. Even so, the Minister of Propaganda managed to censor important passages of his speech. Dr. Schacht stands, not for any more progressive policy than Hitler, but for an alliance of military aristocracy and high finance. His principal concern is to keep things going somehow, and as a man with some sanity left he sees that to add persecution of the Protestants and Catholics (who are about a third of the German population) to the existing outlawry of the Jews is certainly to ride for a fall.

Summer Sport in Germany

There are no signs at present that his words can have effect. In the *Sportspalast* in Berlin last week, Herr Streicher arranged for some twenty thousand people to be publicly incited against Jews and alien pests and especially foreign newspaper correspondents. Amateur Jew-baiting in the summer resorts of Bavaria continues to be a silly-season pastime and the short-lived detention of a naturalised British subject produced a statement from Herr Frank that an alien in "preventive custody" has no right to communicate with his own Consul. But, as Dr. Schacht says, for Germany the religious strife is "of much greater importance than the Jewish question," and a new attack is being launched on the Protestants as well as the Catholics. The Evangelical pastors of Prussia had through their spokesmen firmly repudiated the new regulation calling upon them to pay their surplus funds to the State departments instead of to their central administrative body, at any rate until the latter, which is to meet on September 16th, should have given it sanction. In doing so they took their stand on the *modus vivendi* reached with Bishop Müller. They were told that the penalty would be the cessation of pastors' salaries as from September 1st, and last Saturday the secret police calmly disbanded the Synod of the Confessional Movement in Silesia. This is apparently an attempt on the part of the "German Christians" to stage a come-back, on the assumption that Herr Hitler now favours the creation of a German National Church as the one means of overcoming religious faction.

The Trade Unions and the Left Wing

The Trades Union Congress Final Agenda appeared this week. There will certainly be a quite considerable tussle over the well-known "Black Circular," in which the General Council attempted to impose on Trade Unions and Trades Councils a far-reaching ban on Communists and left-wing organisations in general. Five Unions, including the Amalgamated Engineers and the Locomotive Engineers as well as the Furnishing Trades, have put down strong resolutions of protest against the circular; and other big Unions are known to take the same view. In the voting, much will depend on the line taken by the miners, who have not yet declared their policy; but even if the General Council wins there will clearly be enough division of opinion to make some modification of the present official attitude likely in practice. There will be another tussle over the resolution which expresses regret that Trade Union leaders "should accept honours at the hands of a Government which is not established in the interests of the workers." Congress will hardly pass this, which would be a direct vote of censure on its principal officer; but there is undoubtedly strong feeling on the question, even if the voting is not likely to reflect the feeling in full. Of the remaining resolutions, the most important deal with the creation of a "United Front" against war and the initiation of a concerted movement for higher wages under Congress auspices.

Milk

The Milk Marketing Board is to go on. There never was much doubt concerning the outcome of the ballot, and the size of the majority for continuance—over four to one—is not surprising. What is surprising is the large number of registered producers who did not trouble to vote. Less than 100,000 out of about 170,000 voted, though the issue was of direct and personal concern to every producer. Now that the Scheme is to go on, it ought to be improved; and there is only one way of doing this—by increasing the sale of liquid milk. It is remunerative neither to the producer nor to the public to have a large proportion of the milk supply diverted to manufacturing uses; for this gives the producers a low price, and yet compels the consumer to pay more than they would need to pay for butter and cheese, as well as milk, if more milk were consumed in liquid form.

One way of enlarging demand is to risk lowering prices: another, which should undoubtedly be applied at once whatever the retailers say, is to increase the low-price supply to school-children, and to extend it to children under school age, to unemployed households, and to any other groups of poor consumers whose demand is at present seriously curtailed. Further, the price-inducements to high-quality production ought to be strengthened—whereas so far the effect of the Marketing Board's operations has been to weaken them.

The "Morning Post" and the Air

It is an old controversial dodge to suggest that your opponent has said something absurd which he has not said and then cover him with ridicule. Adopting this technique, the *Morning Post* quotes our remark that the present situation in regard to aerial warfare "might never have arisen if the Government had not itself given the lead in jettisoning proposals for air disarmament," and then asks whether we really think that but for the reluctance of the British Government to abandon the use of aircraft for "bombing isolated districts," "war might have been abolished for ever and aye." We harboured no such illusion. But we do assert that there was, if Lord Londonderry and his friends had permitted it, a real chance—perhaps the one great chance during the whole long and futile disarmament discussions—of internationalising civil aviation and creating an air police common to at least a large and powerful section of the world. How far proposals for this great and creative change had gone the *Morning Post* can discover from League documents or more easily from Mr. Jonathan Griffin's well documented book *Britain's Air Policy*, reviewed in this paper on July 6th last. It was because it was a practical and hopeful project that it was jettisoned in the private interests of Empire. If Great Britain had seized on these proposals, supported by many Governments, the present situation in which we are asked to arm to the utmost and to take futile precautions against a danger that may come from anywhere and be of any unknown magnitude, might, we affirm, never have arisen.

Towards National Parks

Lady Noel-Buxton's gift to the nation of a piece of the South Downs is the latest example of private generosity in a movement which during the present year has been notably quickened. So far the Government has shown no inclination to follow up the recommendations of the Departmental Committee on a National Parks policy, though Mr. Baldwin especially might be expected in this matter to apply the spur to his colleagues. But while the Home Office and the Woods and Forests delay, certain private citizens and the National Trust continue to point the way. Through Professor G. M. Trevelyan, Mr. Clough Williams-Ellis and others, the nation has recently become possessed of areas in Wales and the Peak, in the Lakes and the Chilterns. These achievements are excellent, and we may anticipate that they will have a continuous effect in stimulating individual benevolence and local community effort—which is our traditional way of leading up to Government action.

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LEAGUE, DUCE AND EMPIRE

THE abortive conversations between M. Laval, Mr. Eden and Baron Aloisi in Paris have had one completely conclusive result. They have banished all doubts as to the Duce's intentions. He is not bluffing and he is bent on war for the sake of war. It has become for him a political necessity. Had his motives been of a pedestrian, economic order, the compromise that M. Laval and Mr. Eden offered him would have met all his requirements. Cheaply and without war, he could have had all the material gains that victory might bring—concessions for railways and mines, security for colonisation, a policed frontier, even the appointment of foreign advisers and officers, of whom the majority would have been Italians. This settlement would have allowed Italian enterprise to develop the country, with a minimum of supervision by the League. How much effective independence would have been left to Ethiopia we need not now pause to inquire. The stark fact is that Mussolini refuses to state a case; he wants Abyssinia and prefers to fight for it.

It is plain, then, that the Duce will have his war, unless the Western Powers, acting through the League, are prepared to act in unison against him. Since he is apparently altogether reckless of consequences, such action, beginning with economic sanctions, might in the last resort involve the use of physical force. It is essential to face this situation with frank realism, and to weigh all the complicated pros and cons, before a decision is risked. We have written bluntly "physical force," because we cannot be sure that any less drastic deterrent would be effective. To cut off the supply of munitions would be of no avail, for one assumes that the Italians have already in their possession, in Africa or at home, raw materials and ammunition sufficient for a campaign of several months. Against a virtually unarmed enemy they do not require supplies on the scale to which we grew accustomed in the trenches of Flanders. An economic and financial boycott would be more embarrassing and, as a means of pressure after Mussolini had begun his campaign, the refusal of all financial facilities and a boycott upon supplies of rubber, nickel, tin, petrol and coal might force Mussolini to withdraw. But, with Germany and other Powers outside the League, it would be impossible to make such a boycott complete even if the United States co-operated, and it would not in any case prove immediately effective unless reinforced by a naval blockade. And if one envisages the use of the naval arm, the one certainly effective deterrent comes up for consideration. The closing of the Suez Canal and presumably Perim Straits, would make the conduct of this war impossible. That might be to-day a technical violation of international law, but the Assembly, if not the Council of the League, could presumably take the power to apply the Covenant to override or revise a Treaty drafted before any modern organisation for the prevention of war was in sight. To bring the Canal under the control of the League would be an immense advance in the consolidation of collective security. Such a step might be unwelcome on general grounds to Imperialists, and to consent to it would be the test of this country's sincerity. With this preface, then, our question can be formulated. On the balance, after a survey of all the formidable consequences, are we prepared only for slow economic pressure or are we ready for the one action that certainly would would be effective—the closing by the British and French fleets together of the Suez Canal? We say "together," for we take it that no responsible body of opinion in this country contemplates single-handed British action. No action can be taken without a united League decision following a declaration that Italy is the aggressor, and the project of closing the Suez Canal to Italy could only be undertaken by the joint navies and air fleets of Great Britain and France. Together they have in the Mediterranean an overwhelming predominance.

The consequences that have to be weighed fall into four groups—the future of the League, the imperial issue, the future of Italy herself, and the effects that such action must have on the balance of forces and the risks of war in Europe. (1) The League, as everyone perceives, stands to lose an important but disloyal Member, who described it as an "absurdity" long before he prepared to defy it. On the superficial view it may look like a loss that the League should include only three of the seven Great Powers. People who say this forget the great importance of the joint weight of the small European Powers. Moreover a League that for the first time in its history dared to act against a Great Power would have become, morally and physically, a force in the world. It would rally opinion as it has never done since its early days. A shadow and an aspiration to-day, it would suddenly rank as a reality capable of action. If, on the other hand, the League temporises, fumbles and does nothing effectual, it stands to lose not merely the membership of Italy but the loyalty and belief of all its partisans. On this count, then, the issue is clear enough. The League can be re-animated by action, while if it does nothing effectual it will smother the spark of life that still smoulders in Geneva.

(2) The imperial issue touches this country in a delicate spot. It is probably true, as the Italians say, that when the Treaty of 1906 was signed, the British Government of that day did contemplate the partition of Abyssinia as a possibility of the future, and was content that Italy should have the biggest share of economic opportunity. But this Treaty explicitly forbade singlehanded action by any one of the three signatory Powers, without the express consent of the other two. It is one thing to contemplate pacific penetration by a friendly Italy, and a wholly different thing to permit a hostile, headstrong Italy to create by conquest a powerful military and aerial base in this corner of Africa. A Dictator who laughs at international covenants would be entrenched across the head-waters of the Nile. That, though it concerns no one directly, save Egypt and the British Empire, is a perfectly proper consideration. Conservatives may be thinking also of other issues peculiar to this Empire—the sea-road to India that passes through the Red Sea, and the future of sea-power and air-power in the Mediterranean. On such issues they have no right to seek the support of the League, or of our European friends, and if these were for the British Government the decisive considerations, it would expose itself to ridicule and suspicion if to advance them it used the cloak of humanity and legality. Morally this Empire exposes itself in this affair to a sharp *tu quoque*. It took for itself too many mandates in 1919—to go no farther back—and since Ottawa it has tightened its monopoly over the dependent colonies. This cannot justify the brutality of Italian policy, more especially since Abyssinia is open to peaceful exploitation, but it does create an atmosphere in which the dissatisfied Powers may with some reason arraign the sated Empires. To stop this iniquitous war would be only the first preliminary step towards the just solution of the world-wide problem of economic opportunity.

(3) The Duce has staked on this adventure the future of his own dictatorship. If for any reason he fails—because the climate and the Ethiopian guerillas wear down his armies, or because the ill-balanced economic structure of Italy collapses under the strain—Fascism itself may give way to some other regime, and this would probably be radical. The intervention of the League, if it were effective, might have the same result. Such changes rarely happen without some interval of chaos, and when they do happen, they are apt to spread. For our own part we should welcome the fall of Fascism in Italy as the beginning of a new era of hope for Europe, but we should not expect Conservatives to take the same view.

(4) By far the graver considerations are those that turn on the future balance of forces in Europe. If the League coerces Mussolini, the least of the consequences is that he will quit it. The "Stresa Front," in so far as it still exists, will be broken; indeed, it will probably in any case be broken by a mere condemnation of Mussolini by the League. The Duce, always an opportunist, may then look for support in Hitler's camp, if these two can arrive at a bargain over Austria. It is even suggested that there might at worst then be formed in a central position a formidable coalition of dissatisfied Powers—Germany, Italy, Poland, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria. These are real dangers, but we must put against them the immediate improvement to everyone's safety if Mussolini were overthrown as he would be if the League Powers were determined to stop his Abyssinian adventure. Would the danger in Austria then be as great as it would be if Mussolini is allowed his war? Hitler is not yet ready for war and for the moment he is above all anxious for British friendship. But if the League fails now all aggressive countries, including Germany, know that they can plan their future expansionist plans secure from concerted opposition. This may surely lead to world war: there is a chance, if the League holds together, of preventing it. The French are the clue to this situation. Unless they are willing to give up the virtual alliance they concluded last January with Italy, they have to throw up the League system, lose their allies in Eastern Europe and their security against Hitler. Their press points to our flirtation with Germany with the naval agreement and asks whether we would join them in repelling an eventual German invasion of Austria. But there are signs of change in France; groups and influential political papers see the greater danger in the collapse of the League and a possible breach with Great Britain. Our friendship may in the long run be more important there than dubious alliance with Italy.

We have also to consider the serious possibilities that this Ethiopian dispute will narrow down into a British-Italian quarrel over such issues as Lake Tana and the command of the Mediterranean. If we start in that way, we may end in a British-Italian war, and against that we are as inexorably opposed as Lord Beaverbrook is to supporting the League in trying to prevent it. If, on the other hand, we mean to appeal in earnest to the Covenant, we must prepare ourselves to apply it all round. Again, if we cast ourselves for the part of leadership, a wise leader would seek to restore the League as a genuine council of civilisation: it cannot function if the smaller Powers are relegated to impotent silence. Let no one suppose, however, that the League can settle this business as if it were a judge in chambers who is obeyed when he signs a writ. The League has got to create its own record and its own prestige, and this it cannot do by procrastination and the drafting of formulas. It has a reckless adversary to deal with. Pedantry and postponement will achieve nothing: this is a case for prompt and effective action and resourceful generalship. Unless, in full accord, France and Great Britain are ready to place at its service all their resources, including their fleets, with the single end of stopping a barbarous act of brigandage, it would be wiser not to embark on this enterprise at all.

THE ABYSSINIAN FRONTIERS

[Mr. J. H. Driberg was a British political officer in the Sudan Service and District Commissioner in the Uganda Service, 1912–1926. In his next article he will deal from personal knowledge of the country with the military resources of Abyssinia and the nature of the country in which fighting is likely to take place.—ED., *N.S. & N.*]

THE Wal Wal incident, now used as a pretext that Italy's African frontiers are constantly menaced by Abyssinian incursions and have to be effectively secured by the occupation of Abyssinia, is only to be understood against the background of a series of border forays carried out on both sides along the frontiers of all Abyssinia's neighbours, British, French, or Anglo-Egyptian. There has at times been a tendency to magnify the importance of these raids, and a secondary motive may generally be suspected whenever this tendency has been allowed to gain the upper hand: but usually they have been treated calmly by all concerned, and their real importance lies in the fact that they afford a good clue both to the essential weakness of the Abyssinian system of government and to the cause of that weakness. This supplies the clue also to the question of slavery and slave-raiding.

Having been closely associated with the frontier for a considerable number of years, and having been in intimate touch with others similarly situated, I feel that a brief analysis of these raids may largely absolve the Abyssinian authorities from complicity. Some twenty years ago, before the administration of Uganda and the Sudan, for example, had pushed out to the limits of their frontiers, there was a large territory to the north-east of Lake Rudolf, claimed both by us and by Abyssinia, though effectively occupied by neither and not even given the pretence of administration. The tribes residing in this No-Man's Land, though no more turbulent than the tribes within the Pale, were always accused by the tribe most recently brought under administration of being the most predatory, hostile and ferocious people in existence. The district officer received daily complaints of raids here and incursions there, tales of casualties and the loss of livestock: and if he was impressionable he would play into the complainants' hands by organising a punitive expedition against a people who later proved to be as friendly and amenable as their neighbours. But more often the game of bluff did not work. Our administered tribes naturally wished to get our help in pillaging their really quite friendly enemies, who knew it to be part of the game which they would themselves play later. But in point of fact there was nothing to choose between the two. The administered tribes looted and raided and killed and pillaged just as much as their unadministered neighbours, but the latter had no one to whom they could complain and were so much the worse off.

Into this ungoverned No-Man's Land there gradually filtered a number of choice blackguards despite the precautions that were taken to keep them out—two Europeans at least, sundry Arabs and Baluchis, and in their tail all the scallywags, rascals, flotsam and jetsam thrown up by our alien civilisation, all the detribalised natives who had fallen foul of the law and taken up a career of banditry. These rogues made hay while the sun shone, fell into the local policy of pitting tribe against tribe, and gathered an abundant harvest of slaves and ivory, undeterred by occasional conflicts with our frontier patrols. This continued for many years as an accepted and unavoidable nuisance, but in No-Man's Land no awkward international questions arose and Abyssinian patrols moved as freely as ours.

Gradually, however, administration spread outwards and No-Man's Land was brought under control, though not without protest from the Abyssinian Government, who claimed that they had levied taxes from the inhabitants, though they had done nothing else for them. The frontier had never been demarcated and, for all I know, is still undemarcated, as an attempt to define it proved abortive, though in this matter no blame could be imputed to Abyssinia. Consequently the Abyssinian Government always maintained that its territory extended to Mongalla on the Nile, though in view of our effective occupation some 200 miles east of that point the claim was never seriously considered or contested, and in actual fact a very satisfactory working arrangement was recognised on both sides of an imaginary frontier.

New problems now intervened when once we were in effective occupation up to the frontier. In the first place, the old inter-tribal game continued in full swing and with still greater relish, as each side had Governors whom they could pit against each other. Happily, however, relations were harmonious, and we rarely fell into the error of mistaking a tribal raid from Abyssinia for an Ethiopian incursion, though often under the stress of malaria we damned the authorities for not keeping their tribes in order, just as they no doubt damned us, though they were too polite as a rule to say so. Danakil raids into Eritrea may be placed in this category, and it would be absurd to make a diplomatic mountain out of such an everyday molehill. But it will not be the first time that a molehill has served an ulterior purpose.

Another problem, and a much more serious one, consisted in the outlaws who had infested No-Man's Land. The Europeans died or disappeared, but the number of Baluchis, Arabs and detribalised outlaws increased enormously, and with the advance of civilisation retreated over the frontier, where in conditions less hostile to their survival they have formed a number of companies or bands of brigands, all well armed, completely unscrupulous and knowing no law. These *shiftas*, as the Abyssinians call them, are a menace to travellers and to the tribes among whom they move, and are as unpopular with the Abyssinian authorities as they are with us. Being, as a rule, better armed and equipped than the local levies, the Abyssinian Governors find them a hard problem to deal with, and their survival against the large numbers at the authorities' disposal is a proof, if proof be needed, of the difficulty of dealing with a mobile enemy in a country which offers every advantage to defence and none to attack. It is these *shiftas* who have been largely responsible for the "Abyssinian raids." It may be truthfully said that a raid over the frontier has very rarely been organised by an Abyssinian Governor: the only instance that I know of incurred the severe displeasure of Ras Taffari, as he was then, and the Governor was sent in chains to Addis Ababa for punishment.

But the *shiftas* are more than a local menace, because they can, and do, involve the Abyssinian authorities in their illegal incursions. They are themselves in a curious situation. They know that they are universally disliked, though they are also feared, and that it is only this fear which prevents the tribes assisting the authorities to exterminate them. They exist on their immoral prestige, and would gladly disperse, as many of the Baluchis have already done, were it not for the fact that they are heavily in debt to the ubiquitous Greek trader and money-lender, who is to be found at nearly every Governor's headquarters. The Gilbertian situation is, therefore, that the Greek hires the Governor's soldiers at a high fee to watch the *shiftas*, whom the Governor would prefer to exterminate. Why the Governor has to consent to this ridiculous arrangement will become clear shortly.

There is a perennial shortage of ammunition, or was till Abyssinia was freed of the effects of the Brussels Act. The Greek by his devious methods imported illicit munitions, and whenever the *shiftas* ran out of ammunition, or wanted to be equipped for a raid, they had to go to him. He advanced them their requirements on the understanding that they should bring all their loot—ivory or slaves—to him in order that he might have a preferential share in repayment of his debt. As he naturally did not trust the *shiftas*, he hired soldiers to accompany them, and however much the Governor might impress on them their duty to watch the *shiftas* and bring them back, being Abyssinians they naturally could not resist the gun-play involved in the raid, thereby bringing their Government into disrepute.

This absurd situation could never have arisen but for two reasons, the feudal system of government under which Abyssinia is ruled and the financial bankruptcy of the Central Government. The present Emperor is fully aware of the trouble, but without a complete change in the administration and economics of government he is, with the best will in the world, unable to rectify matters. In Abyssinia proper, where the feudal system is a reality, where the Governors are living on their own estates, the system works well enough. But to most Abyssinians the pagan south, conquered primarily to repress the turbulent Galla, who once had the audacity to sack Addis Ababa, and ultimately for exploitation, is a land of exile and hard-living; and the only compensation it offers is a financial one. The feudal system was transferred to these southern provinces, where it has never worked and where it can never work. Provincial Governors are appointed at the Emperor's pleasure to rule as feudal lords. Unfortunately they have no tenants who know the laws of feudality, but a number of hard-bitten pagan tribes who show the Governor scant courtesy. These, curiously enough, respect the Emperor's name, and the seal, which is an unfailing passport for every traveller. The Governor's duties are to maintain order, to collect taxes and to administer justice. He also has to provide his feudal quota to the Emperor's army and to maintain an army locally for his own needs. He receives no pay or maintenance for any of these purposes, but keeps a proportion of the tax as his purse. He has to observe a considerable state and his retinue all require feeding and housing. Added to this, his appointment depends on the pleasure of the Emperor, so his quota of taxes has to be up to standard, or he will be dismissed. Consequently the Governor is forced to do the best for himself in as short a time as possible. His feudal army, the nucleus of which consists of his own retainers brought down with him to share his exile, has to be boarded out in the neighbouring villages, on whom falls the duty of supplying them with food and drink. Taxation is levied in cash or kind to the maximum capacity, and the financial situation has to be helped out by all sorts of illegal methods. One Governor of my acquaintance, for example, made his fortune by selling modern rifles to the Bume tribe in exchange for their cattle—to the intense embarrassment of his successor, who found himself besieged in his capital by an army better armed than his own. And, naturally, participation in the results of slave-raids cannot be resisted by Governors who receive no remuneration from headquarters.

It will be seen that the divergence between the feudal system of the north and the pseudo-feudal system of the south has definite military consequences which any invader should take into calculation.

J. H. DRIBERG

THE POLITICS OF STABILISATION

[FROM A FINANCIAL CORRESPONDENT]

EXCHANGE stabilisation is very much in the air. A resolution of the international economic conference of Chambers of Commerce calls for it. The gold countries desire it. The international financial houses of the City of London plead for it. The Bank of England—essentially the mouthpiece of the City financiers—makes no secret of its wishes in the matter, and when the Bank of England wants something it has a habit of getting its own way. But in each case the considerations behind the desire for stabilisation are primarily economic and no attempt is made to assess the probable political consequences.

Now it is precisely this indifference to the political consequences of financial action that has stultified a great part of post-war economic reconstruction. The return of this country to the gold standard inevitably provoked the General Strike of 1926. The Young Plan of 1929, with its elaborate scheme for the economic enslavement of Germany for a period of sixty years, collapsed within a few months of its inception, owing to the failure to take into account the political reaction in Germany, which took the form of Dr. Schacht's alliance with the Nazi heavy industry faction to overthrow the Centre Government. The "purely financial" assistance which Mr. Montagu Norman extended to the Austrian Credit-Anstalt in the spring of 1931 was the first link in the chain of events which provoked French political-financial aggression, the British departure from the gold standard and the formation of the so-called National Government. It is difficult to believe that financial action of such major importance as a return to stabilised exchange conditions on some form of gold standard would not be attended by equally important results in the sphere of world politics.

Obviously the first necessity arising out of any international agreement for exchange stabilisation is some form of mechanism for maintaining the agreed ratios over a reasonably lengthy period. Most of the numerous schemes already put forward envisage the utilisation of the various national Exchange Equalisation Funds for this purpose; in principle, indeed, the mechanism has already been seen in action in the collaboration of this country's Exchange Equalisation Fund for the maintenance of the franc during the recent French crisis. But any general international agreement would necessitate co-operation on much more comprehensive lines, and it is essential to realise that an organisation comprehensive enough for the purpose in view is already in existence —the Bank for International Settlements. The B.I.S., created as part of the abortive Young Plan, was in essence a grandiose Norman-Morgan project for the establishment of big bankers' control of economic affairs in Europe. This dream was not realised for several reasons, notably the French refusal to collaborate and, later, the British departure from the gold standard in spite of Mr. Norman's extravagantly costly efforts to keep on it. Nevertheless, although the B.I.S., which is at present still located in Basle and not, as Mr. Norman had originally hoped, in London, has so far functioned only in minor spheres, its organisation has remained intact. Further, unlike the Council of the League of Nations, for instance, its Board is a thoroughly representative international body in which the United States, Germany and Japan are all included. The point of the comparison will be made clear in a moment.

The Bank of England has never abandoned its original hopes regarding the B.I.S., whose potentialities have been carefully nursed by the monthly meetings at Basle of the heads of the Central Banks of the leading countries. (Incidentally it is worth noting that Mr. Norman has always been at pains to emphasise the fact that the Bank of England is a Central Bank rather than a National Bank—a pretty obvious and often unhappy truth.) Now in the first place any scheme of stabilisation would offer the B.I.S. an effective sphere of operations to replace the completely defunct problems of German reparations, so that it is scarcely possible to dissociate the Bank of England's enthusiasm for stabilisation from its no less candid interest in the Bank for International Settlements. It is in this connection that the political effects of stabilisation will most probably assume first-rate importance in international affairs.

For if the B.I.S. is given executive control of the combined resources of the various Exchange Equalisation Funds, the monthly meeting of the heads of the Central Banks will soon enough replace the meetings of the Council of the League in international significance. And not only that. Most of the national representatives on the League Council or Assembly are subject to some form of parliamentary or constitutional control, whereas in most cases the governors of the Central Banks are merely the voice of the high finance interests in their respective countries and are subject only to very remote political control or to none at all. An example of the situation which may well arise is suggested by the recent collaboration of the British authorities with the Bank of France in checking speculation in gold and forward exchange transactions. Such co-operation may be termed once again " purely financial," but in point of fact it amounts to direct intervention by this country in French internal politics, whose predominant issue has been defined by speakers of all groups and parties in the Chamber as " the Bank of France *versus* the Nation." The position in regard to Germany is even more disturbing. Dr. Schacht is one of the most energetic figures at the monthly meetings at Basle, and he would clearly be in a position to attract from his banking colleagues on the Board of the B.I.S., in the name of maintaining exchange equilibrium and furthering world trade, foreign capital and credits which might well prove the decisive factor in the Nazi struggle to maintain power in Germany against the rising tide of working-class discontent.

Thus the Board of the B.I.S. would be transformed into an all-powerful agency for the consolidation of the European capitalist structure in the interests of certain sectional national groups, and might well play the part in twentieth-century Europe of the Holy Alliance of the nineteenth century—with Mr. Norman doubling the roles of Alexander I and Metternich. It is no use urging in favour of the scheme that it would fortify the present sterling area and restore the financial pre-eminence of London ; the cost would be wildly prohibitive in the long run. Nor is there any sense in falling back upon the rather stale reassurance that the Bank of England representative would consult if necessary with the Treasury ; all the crucial problems are likely to fall within the province of the Foreign Office, not of the Treasury. And the picture of Mr. Norman as a third—or is it a fifth ?—British Foreign Secretary does not inspire confidence.

On the other hand, nothing is more certain than that the creation of an effective centralised financial body invested with international authority could be made to yield far-reaching and entirely beneficent results. In favourable circumstances, international agreement on exchange stabilisation might, in fact, be a preliminary step towards the maintenance of European peace, since it contains the possibilities of action against an aggressor not less effective than the economic sanctions which the League of Nations has been so reluctant to enforce. In this connection it is surely significant that the League subcommittee appointed to investigate the adoption of economic sanctions has just reported that after all it envisages no real difficulty in enforcing them against an aggressor.

Whatever the outcome of the present conversations on stabilisation, it is clear that the time is past when the Bank of England could be allowed to regard matters of this description as the private concern of its most influential proprietors. The need for stringent control by Parliament of the Bank's actions grows daily more apparent. Mr. Norman's strange passion for mystery should no longer be permitted to deprive the elected representatives of the nation of their legitimate responsibility for both the initiation and execution of national policy.

A LONDON DIARY

Letters in this week's *Times* from George Lansbury, the Archbishop of York and Dick Sheppard show the extraordinary difficulty in which the Christian pacifist finds himself if he has public responsibility and is not content with the purely personal decision not himself to take part in war. The Archbishop is prepared to make a shot at turning the League into a reality by substituting international police action for private war ; George Lansbury, no doubt, fearing, as we all do, that the League will fail us or simply land us into a camouflaged war for power, makes a desperate appeal to the Churches and to the Pope. It would certainly be splendid if the Churches, or even some of them, could come together in defence of Christian principles, but I fear it would be a miracle if the aged Pope proved to have more influence over Mussolini than Mussolini has over him. Dick Sheppard and his army of non-resisters are willing to go anywhere and do anything for the sake of peace, and they may yet find an opportunity to be effective. But over the Abyssinian dispute they are in the fundamental dilemma that Christian pacifists, including Christian politicians like Gladstone and Bright, have always been in. Christ was quite clearly a non-resister who believed in turning the other cheek and in loving your enemies even in time of war—which is, after all, the only time when you have enemies to love. But he gave no guidance for cases in which the other fellow was being assaulted. So far as it goes the story of the Good Samaritan is clear enough. If you come along and find your neighbour, Jew or Gentile, beaten up by robbers and left for dead by the roadside, you pick him up, bathe his wounds, put him on your mule, take him to an inn and give the landlord 2*d*. (or more if necessary) to look after him. But what is your duty if you arrive while the robbers are still there ? Should you barge in and fight for your hard-pressed neighbour or should you merely make a protest ? In any case I take it you should not merely pass by on the other side.

* * *

The murder of Gareth Jones in territory dominated by Japan ought to shame some of those who have supported Japan's claims on the ground that she would suppress bandits. Actually banditry has increased with Japan's advance ; the *Times* gives the number of " professional bandits " now in Manchukuo as 60,000 as well as 120,000 others whom, I suppose, one must call amateurs. I wish these bandits had carried off a Japanese general or two and left Gareth Jones alone. He was an exceptionally able and interesting man and a brilliant linguist. (Linguistic like musical ability is a special faculty which may or may not coincide with general intellectual capacity.) I used to get Gareth Jones to translate Soviet newspapers for me and found him full of fascinating information about the Russian countryside where he had talked freely to the peasants and got hold of their point of view. He was by no means an " anti-Bolshevik," but, as a keen investigator and good journalist, he wrote without reserve about the distress he saw in the villages before the famine of 1932. I had no great opinion of his judgment ; but he was the very man to go to for raw material, and when he came back from his travels I looked forward to seeing him with a more lively pleasure than I can always summon at the prospect of meeting people whose opinions are more closely allied to my own.

* * *

As far as I know no one has yet written *The Complete History of the Art of Begging*. I picture it as a fascinating book taking one through the ages and introducing one to the underworld of many lands. Any observant person can write a first chapter for himself and even the unobservant must notice the difference between the comparatively reserved technique of begging in England and the unashamed appeals to pity common in the Mediterranean countries. One of the first difficulties would be to distinguish between the beggar pure and simple and the entertainer who is also a beggar. In

England police regulations make the distinction impossible. I remember once passing with Francis Birrell a particularly cracked and raucous barrel organ. "Well," said Francis, "the unemployed do get a bit of their own back anyway, don't they?" In contrast I recall the gaiety of the gypsy music I heard on the Czech-Polish frontier recently. But though the gypsies were genuine entertainers they were none the less beggars, for we were waylaid as we waited not only by the musicians themselves, but by all their innumerable dirty children who fought on the ground for pennies and food and cried if they could not snatch a discarded morsel of sandwich. Gypsies beg harder than anyone for they are hungry, and they play better than other beggars because music is in their blood.

* * *

In London lately I fancy I have detected a more adventurous spirit among beggars and entertainers. One enterprising party travels about in a taxi with a set of bells and a piano and I know of a street pianist who collects children round him like the pied piper and gets them singing popular songs more or less in unison. In Oxford Street the more pushful match seller no longer stands with his back to the wall but at right angles to it in order to catch the flow of pedestrians as it passes. Among pavement artists there has been a break with the crayon tradition, though I know of one original fellow in Hampstead, who has discarded the usual appeal on behalf of a sick wife and ten children, and has a notice bearing the far more sinister words "Gastric and duodenal pains." This man always has a topical drawing with a striking inscription. The other day an Abyssinian was depicted in lilac and orange saying, "Why should we be civilised? Are you?" On another occasion he had a fierce reference to the Hampstead dog nuisance: "Worship God not animals." Or was this a reference to his competitor up the street who plays a gramophone and has a fox terrier to collect the money from dog-loving ladies? This dog is evidently an important asset, for one day, when the dog was not with him, the man had propped a notice on his gramophone, bearing the immortal words "Dog indisposed."

* * *

I think it was J. B. Priestley who once said that when nudism begins curiosity flies out of the window. Mine certainly took wings and fled out of the garden gate when I chanced last Sunday to find myself among a party of nudists. These were, of course, entirely respectable—indeed the sight of so much flesh is apt to be positively chilling. "Organised sun-bathing," as this was called, seems to me silly and self-conscious. If a party of people on holiday prefer not to wear clothes while they carry on with their ordinary amusements, I can see no objection. Bathing without clothes, for instance, is much pleasanter than bathing in a costume. If the bathers are nice to look at and do not obtrude themselves on the conventionally minded, I'm all for it. But when nudism is a cult and leads to people sitting about naked while they read poetry or playing specially organised round games, it just makes me laugh.

* * *

An exceptionally well-informed correspondent who is frequently in Germany, writes to tell me that he heard several months ago that Goebbels was systematically preparing for the anti-Catholic drive. He is apparently busy collecting obscene stories about Catholics which can be used for propaganda purposes just as Streicher's nauseating stuff about the Jews has been used in *Der Sturmer*. Any old story about the seduction of a boy or a woman by a priest will be grist to his mill and can be kept in hand in case justification is wanted for a more vile type of persecution.

* * *

I enjoyed this gem which the *News-Chronicle* quotes (on the authority of the British United Press) from Julius Streicher, the Jew-baiter, now in high favour in Hitler's Germany:

> The great Jew who lived in England, Benjamin Disraeli, became Premier. Later he was elevated to the Peerage under the name of Lord Gladstone.

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of the column goes this week to Mr. C. E. Minns.

All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1.

The bows of the Napier Star had ripped through the bows of the Laurentic just beneath one of the anchors. . . .

Three men were found dead in their bunks, three others were missing, their bodies hidden amongst the tangled mass of debris. . . .

How near disaster came to catastrophe was also evident. Had the Napier Star struck twenty yards further astern, she would have cut clean into the first-class staterooms.—*Daily Mirror.*

Coming into my empty house one afternoon, I was surprised to hear music, and found I had left the wireless on. My room, which is long and narrow, and has a window at each end, was full of butterflies all dancing to the music, and the sight was so pretty that I thought your readers might be interested in hearing of it.—Letter in *Observer.*

Chatsworth without the Duchess of Devonshire would still be beautiful, but I do not stand alone in believing that the trees would hold their heads less high and the flowers lose something of their radiance.—*Star*

Had it not been for a vicar I might never have handled a club. I dread to think of what sort of job I should have made of my life had this been the case.—Golfing article in *News of the World.*

We always say that however much machines may progress, however skilled factory-made lingerie may be, we still take a snobbish and artistic pleasure in the word "hand-made." Wolsey, understanding this quaint psychology, have invented a special machine, so delicate that it actually copies the tiny faults of handwork.—*Good Housekeeping.*

The features of Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. J. H. Thomas may not be caricatured on the stage. A ruling by the Lord Chamberlain to this effect was received in Manchester to-day while Mr. Andre Charlot was holding the final rehearsals of his new revue, "Stop-Go!" which will be produced at the Princes Theatre to-morrow.—*Daily Telegraph.*

From where is sea-level taken when building in any part of England?—Letter in *Daily Mail.*

He would appeal to the public not only to buy Morris motors but to buy the products of Great Britain, which was the greatest country in the world.—Lord Nuffield at lunch, reported in the *Times.*

The present state of affairs was disgraceful. Unless the steel producers changed their methods his firm would buy their steel outside this country.—Lord Nuffield at dinner, reported in *Times* same date.

"It is not a question of a colour bar in the accepted sense," the manager of the pool, which is one of the biggest in the South of England, told the *Daily Herald.* "Our experience is that women bathers, in particular, do not like to be in the pool at the same time as coloured men."—*Daily Herald.*

Moreover, in so far as he knows or cares anything about it at all, the average Briton entirely sympathises with Italy's Abyssinian aims. Our history being what it is, we can hardly, unless we are a nation of case-hardened hypocrites, do otherwise.—*Evening News.*

COUGHING

AT an educational conference the other day, someone made a savage attack on children who cough in the schoolroom. Well, perhaps, not quite savage, but what one might describe as "unsympathetic." Coughing, it appears, is usually not a symptom of physical distress but merely a bad habit. The child who coughs is simply indulging in a nervous weakness, for which there is no more excuse than for yawning, and the habit could easily be eradicated by lessons in self-control. Then, the coughing infant would grow up to be a pleasant human being incapable of annoying his fellow-men by his uvular spasms in the theatre or the concert-room, in church or at the banqueting-table.

I call this attitude to coughing unsympathetic, because I do not believe that the ordinary cougher is happy or indifferent to the fact that he is irritating his neighbours with his barks and wheezes. The cougher is seldom a self-assertive person. He is not an exhibitionist like the man or boy who blows his nose loudly. I remember a boy at school who, when he thought things were going too slowly in class, would bring out an enormous handkerchief and proceed to give a music-hall performance as if on a trombone, which would successfully distract the attention of the class from the work in hand, and convulse the more vulgar part of it—which often included the schoolmaster himself, for the boy was a natural comedian. Here was boyhood at play, rioting in the joy of being young and impudent. But who ever heard of a boy's enjoying himself coughing? When was a cough in a class ever an expression of high spirits? The cougher, so far as I have studied him, takes no pleasure in his gifts. He does not feel that he is clever in being able to cough oftener in an hour than anybody else in the room. In fact, the oftener he coughs, the more he regards himself as a pest of society, and he would willingly do anything short of choking himself to suppress his every cough at its birth.

I regard the cougher mainly, then, not as an evil-doer, but as a sufferer. We often hear people denounced for coughing in church, but I, for my part, could never denounce them, for I know that, though they coughed, they were all trying not to cough. If you watch them closely, you will notice how each of them is constantly waiting for somebody else to cough in order that he himself may have the courage to join in and set free the tickle in his throat. One of the most impressive things, psychologically speaking, in a church service, is the way in which one cough often swells into a chorus of a hundred. This is evidence that ninety-nine of the coughers had been enduring sufferings like those of the damned, waging an unseen battle with pharynx, larynx, uvula and bronchial tubes, fearing to do anything to annoy their fellow-worshippers till someone, braver or more hard-beset than the others, gave his lungs their liberty. Then what a general release was there—what a chorus of liberated sound, loud and multitudinous as the crowing of cocks at Granada! At the height of the coughing season, this great moment frequently takes place after the congregation has raised its head from prayer. It is then that Mrs. A. feels free to make up for lost time and let loose all the coughs that she has been storing up, a martyr to reverence. It is then that Mr. B. coughs and wheezes fortissimo till his stomach shakes, and slips a lozenge into his mouth to steady himself till the next opportunity for community coughing arises. At such a moment the whole church building is filled with big coughs, middle-sized coughs, and little coughs, everybody taking advantage of the brief interval before the next period of repression beings.

Now many clergymen, throughout the ages, have been greatly irritated by coughing in church. Never yet have I heard a clergyman say at the Sunday dinner-table: "Poor Miss C., I noticed that she coughed right through my sermon to-day. I felt quite sorry for her." On the contrary, many clergymen regard coughing during the sermon as a criticism of their preaching. They have heard it said that, when a preacher has his audience under a spell, coughing absolutely ceases and you could hear a pin drop. Hence, when a preacher realises in the middle of his sermon that you could not hear a pin, or even a crowbar, drop because of the coughing of his flock, it is not to be wondered at that he sometimes feels disheartened, even embittered. All this repressed bitterness must act as a poison in his being. There are moments at which he must long to cry out to the coughers: "Stop it! Do you hear me? Shut up!" But his principles forbid such candour. I have known only one preacher who was human enough to tell a hearer who irritated him exactly what he thought of him. I do not know what had annoyed him—some expression, perhaps, on the hearer's face—but he suddenly looked down at him and said: "For God's sake, don't look so wise. No man was ever half so wise as you look." He seemed much happier after he had said this, as though he had got rid of something that was lying heavily on his soul. At the time, I thought his conduct interesting, but not commendable. Now, however, that the clergy are told that coughing is not an affliction but merely a bad habit—almost a vice, in fact—is there not a danger that many of them may fly into a frankness some day and make a frontal attack from the pulpit on the coughers, calling them all the names that have been on the tip of their tongues for years past? In this way they would, no doubt, easily put a stop to coughing, but it would be at the expense of Christian charity.

I trust, therefore, that, if they do initiate a campaign against coughing, they will use no weapons except persuasion. Let them have a little leaflet on church etiquette printed, and distributed among their parishioners. They will find some apt quotations for their purpose, in an American book of etiquette that I recently had occasion to eulogise. Nothing truer on the subject of coughing in church has been written than appears in this book. "Loud coughing and sneezing," we are told, "are most objectionable. Take small unperfumed candies to church with you, if you are subject to coughing spells. The hawking of some rude men is too disgusting to describe." Nor is this the only piece of sound advice the author gives us about manners in church. We are warned, for example: "Never speak to a person when you see that he is engaged in prayer, meditation or reading." It would certainly be in bad taste to interrupt a man's prayers to ask him in a whisper whether he had heard of anything likely to beat Bahram in the St. Leger. On the subject of general conversation in church, the author's advice is equally worthy of attention. "There should be no talking in church," she declares, "but, if you do speak, do so very quietly. Whispering is most annoying, especially when the speaker has an over-supply of sibilants. The hissing sound of *s* is disturbing." Even here, however, just as my sympathies go out to the coughers, so I cannot help sympathising with the speaker who uses an over-supply of sibilants. It is difficult enough to mind one's p's and q's all the week without the additional burden of having to mind one's s's on Sunday. Besides, how can one lean over to the pew in front and whisper: "How is Mrs. Smith's sciatica?" without making hissing noises? Perhaps the inventors of Basic English will be able to give us an English vocabulary, containing no sibilants, which will be suitable for whispering in churches. In the meantime I regard the whisperers and hissers, like the coughers, as the tragic victims of necessity.

Those who are prompt to condemn others as nuisances should remember that the nuisance is usually more miserable than the people to whom he is a nuisance. If I sit beside a cougher in Queen's Hall at a Beethoven concert I am only slightly unhappy, but if I am a cougher myself and know that I have to wait till the brass begins to blare and the drums to beat before I can escape from the maddening tickle in my throat, I endure a double agony—the agony of fearing that I may destroy other people's pleasure by coughing while the orchestra is playing pianissimo and the whole house is stilled into an ecstasy, and the agony of keeping the cough under. Similarly, I hold that the man who arrives late at a theatre, if he is a civilised human being, suffers far more than the people whom he pushes past and on whose toes he treads. Yet it is he, and not they, who gets all the curses. It is the same all through life; and if we were more imaginative and more just, we should realise that, great a nuisance as many people are to others, they are often a far worse nuisance to themselves. Let us, then, sympathise with, instead of condemning the late-comer, the cougher, and all such pests. Which of us would willingly be in their shoes, if there were another pair of shoes, however uncomfortable and ill-fitting, to be had?

Y. Y.

GAS

Air Raid Precautions. Handbook No. 2. Issued by the Home Office. (Air Raid Precautions Department.)

Air Raid Precautions in the Home. Handbook No. 1. *(In preparation.)*

WHEN raiding squadrons swoop uninvited
As packed with bombs as a cod with roes,
Let no non-combatant bolt affrighted,
The lame, the halt or the adipose;
For the Air Raid Handbook and Pocket Guide
To cot and castle is now supplied,
With simple rules for the most benighted,
In departmental and pregnant prose.

When greensick chlorine is richly seething,
When phosgene settles like insect spray,
When blossomy bromobenzyl's wreathing,
When mustard fumes with the breezes play,
When pear-drop perfumes with tear-drops mix,
Unsling the gas-mask and smartly fix,
While British phlegm and suspended breathing
The deleterious whiffs allay.

As gas clouds wander in your direction
Describe what odours their droplets rain;
No lethal stenches defy detection
If peace-time noses on gas we train;
Proceed, at signals from ground-patrols,
To air-lock cellars and gastight holes,
(See decontamination section)
While high explosives explode in vain.

Lord, make us an air-raid-minded-nation,
Gas-drilled, gas-filled by the prudent State,
On nitrous vapours in combination
With ethyl iodoacetate!
Till massed offensives we see advance
With the imperturbable nonchalance
Of a tested gas-proof population
No gas on earth could asphyxiate.

SAGITTARIUS

Correspondence

HOME-TRUTHS FROM ITALY

SIR,—To the outer world to-day Italy is a mere Bedlam whence nothing is audible but the snarls of the Duce, the yappings of Signor Gayda, and the cheers of young men, duped and doped, being shipped off like cattle to the slaughter in Abyssinia. There is a danger of coming unconsciously to think, like Mussolini, that Mussolini is Italy. What is "Italy"? One of those deadly abstractions on which mankind gets drunk more dangerously than on wood-alcohol. What of the Italians, behind the padded cells of the censorship? A few extracts from letters I have had may be of interest.

The first comes from Rome, not the less moving for its broken English. It regrets that self-preservation makes it vital

> to keep the most coward and shameful anonymous. But on the other hand I am compelled to tell you that we agree completely with you (the reference is to two letters on Abyssinia in the daily press). It is the fact of Mussolini's being beset by Julius Caesar's and Napoleon's remembrance that is bringing Italy to a financial, cultural and political ruin. There is, however, a *little* difference: Julius Caesar and Napoleon moved at the head of their troops, whilst Sig. Mussolini . . . is bathing at Riccione. If we are to go to Abyssinia to suppress slavery, why do not the Abyssininians come to . . . Italy? I would write a novel rather than a letter if only I would try to make an attempt of telling you all the griefs that we, cultivated Italians, have against such a middle-aged regime and such sort of wild dictatorship. Over (*i.e.*, out of) 100 Italians you may, I am sure, find more than 80 who agree with your statement that the present Italian Government is by no means the same as Italy.

He is a little optimistic, as yet, I am afraid.)

The next letter is from an Italian scientist, whose name, of course, it would be unsafe to give. He confirms the extent to which the pressure of population, on which Italy's "need for expansion" is based, has been aggravated by Mussolini's own actions in blocking emigration before the Slump and forcing up the birthrate by lavishly subsidizing not only married but unmarried mothers; a policy that might have had more effect but for the grinding poverty of the workers. "In —— the poor are reduced to make their polenta without salt, because they cannot afford the expensive government-product." As for Abyssinian "aggressiveness":

> During the war we were so hardly pressed by the few thousands of Arabs of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania that we were compelled to abandon the hinterland. Nothing of the kind occurred in Eritrea or in Somaliland, although millions of Abyssinians were living in Ethiopia. . . . It is symptomatic that since Jubaland was transferred to the blessings of the Blackshirt regime the native tribes have often at the risk of their lives tried to drift towards the country still under the British flag. . . . Believe me, sir, you would have received millions of letters of approval from my countrymen but for two reasons: the *Daily Telegraph* does not reach them and they would be risking a heavy sentence for high treason.

But it is fair to give the other side also. I have been honoured with two postcards from Sig. Benelli, of Florence, who needs no "coward and shameful anonymous." The first is, unfortunately, untranslatable and unprintable. The second is (no doubt to reinforce the impression of Italian culture) on the back of a picture of the Palazzo della Signoria. (Sig. Benelli's views are indeed in better taste than his opinions.) It runs:

> Discussion within the limits of common kindness being impossible with a croaking, tea-drinking frog as you are, we just inform you that you will be presented as soon as possible with a clyster of Lake Tana hard-biting young crabs. This will cure you of your articles-writing mania. N. G. Benelli for the whole Fascist ever ready Militia.

It is perhaps worth noting that Sig. Benelli, though thus electrically "ever-ready," has not yet himself taken ship for Ethiopia. Finally, a friend writes from Italy:

> Never have I had such a terrible sensation of people who dare not talk nor think. There was an old artist whose son had been called up and could not speak of it (in private) without tears in his eyes—but suddenly he suggested a picnic, to break off this forbidden conversation, these forbidden thoughts. *Bisogna star quieto*—and obey the Duce. Trade is at a standstill. Foreign currency is unobtainable. The fruit costs nothing and yet rots in the market, for even this nothing is too much for the common people; and the pretty little houses among the magnificent olives, beside the infinite ironic laughter of the sea, are all for sale at miserable prices.

While across the frontier "Nice is full of hatred and contempt for 'ces sales Italiens qui cherchent encore à mettre le feu en Europe.'"

The terrible words of Dante have not lost their sting:

Ahi serva Italia, di dolore ostello,
Nave senza nocchiero in gran tempesta,
Non donna di provincie, ma bordello!

Cambridge. F. L. LUCAS

THE LEAGUE AND THE SMALL POWERS

SIR,—In the multitudinous discussions on the Italo-Abyssinian dispute, there is one important aspect which has not received due consideration—the attitude of the small nations. In contradistinction to the four Great Powers, twenty-three European States are included in this category, though some of them approximate at least to the status of one of the "Big Four." If we can imagine these twenty-three States amalgamated into one political entity, speaking with one voice and voting in one lobby at Geneva, they would be able to exercise almost as much influence as the four Great Powers put together. For proof of this we have only to peruse the schedule of payments which each State Member contributes annually to the maintenance of the League. The four Great Powers contribute between them 323 units, whilst the twenty-three smaller nations are assessed at 306 units. Thus it will be seen that the total amount contributed by the latter is almost equivalent to that of the former. From this fact we can draw two deductions. The first is that if the twenty-three smaller States formed themselves into a federation the political influence which would be exerted by such a union would be almost equivalent to that exercised by the four Great Powers combined, or at any rate greater than any two of them in alliance: secondly, that in any development of the machinery of the League in Europe, for instance, an Equity Tribunal and International Police Force.

approximately half the cost would be borne by the smaller nations. It is obvious that no country would benefit more by such an arrangement than the smaller nations themselves. Instead of hanging on to the skirts of the big Powers and concluding precarious alliances, they would be able to participate on the basis of equality in the reign of law, with the assurance that their rights would be respected and that, in the words of William Penn, the national sovereignties " are as they were, for none of them now have any sovereignty over one another, and if this be called a lessening of their power it must be only because the great fish can no longer eat up the little ones, and that each sovereignty is equally defended from injuries and disabled from committing them."

Few people, I imagine, would suggest that a federation of the twenty-three smaller States was a practical proposition at the moment, for reasons which I need not elaborate. But there appears to be no insuperable reason why they should not consent *to participate in the development of the League into an international authority*, at any rate in Europe. They can never hope to rely upon their own national armaments for security. Alliances are fleeting and dangerous. But an International Police Force, financed and equipped by the Smaller States, in conjunction with even two or possibly all of the big Powers, would confer upon the League such a superiority of force as would enable it to deter any big Power from resorting to war.

There is no other way of escape from the anarchic conditions under which the peoples of Europe choose to live to-day. As the Italo-Abyssinian crisis, following upon the Manchurian debacle, has proved, not only moral but also physical force must be concentrated under the control of an international authority. Consequently one asks the question, " What are the twenty-three small nations doing to assert the reign of law ? " Where are their champions and spokesmen ? Where are the successors of Nansen and Branting ? Why are their voices not raised in protest against the chicanery and cowardice of their bigger neighbours ? What attempt is being made to effect combined action amongst those smaller nations that are prepared, not only to shout for peace, but also willing to contribute their appropriate share of the burden which its maintenance involves ?

From the press reports during the recent proceedings of the Council at Geneva, it would appear that most of the talking and negotiating was done by representatives of the big Powers. Does this mean that the smaller brethren are not prepared to shoulder the responsibilities of collective action and throw their weight into the scales to assert the principles and Articles of the Covenant ? In the past, small nations have played a great role in the shaping of the destinies of mankind. Here is a new opportunity of exerting their combined influence to make straight the paths of justice and to strengthen the bulwarks of peace. DAVIES

Thorney House, Smith Square,
London, S.W.1.

AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS

Sir,—Was the National Executive Committee's advice, to co-operate with the Home Office on air raid precautions, wise or unwise ? I think it was wise. But it should be made much more precise.

The precautions which are possible *against poison-gas* are, as Lord Russell states, " known to be far less effective than the circular would lead people to believe " and are " calculated to give an entirely fallacious sense of security." These, therefore, should be opposed and exposed at once and untiringly.

But those who oppose the Home Office circular should re-read it carefully. They will see that it does not aim at protecting great cities, with their inhabitants and their art treasures, against murderous attacks from the air, but only at preventing the disaster from extending to thousands or hundreds of thousands of people other than the direct victims. Indiscriminate opposition to such precautions would be certainly foolish and probably wrong.

The right policy for Labour is, I believe, to oppose some of the suggested precautions and support others, in each case giving its reasons. For example, we must oppose anti-gas drill ; but we should support proposals for storing food in the British Isles, because that would remove the danger of starvation in the event of the lines of communication being cut by air attacks on ships and docks—and because this relief would make it possible to reduce the Navy. Proposals designed to keep open or re-open the " essential services " after an air attack should be supported, provided they do not involve dangerous encroachments on civil liberties. JONATHAN GRIFFIN

THE CLAIMS OF SCIENCE

Sir,—Permit me to agree with Mr. Grant Watson, as against Professor Hogben, that there is to-day a crisis in biological thought, though not in the thought of most professional biologists. Nevertheless, I cannot agree with Mr. Grant Watson's account of the crisis. May I suggest that it mirrors a crisis in biological practice ?

Our ability to predict and control biological phenomena under academic conditions is steadily and rapidly increasing, but it is not being applied because its application rarely yields substantial private profits. If Mr. Watson dismissed the reality of sex-linkage as he dismisses that of the effectiveness of selection on characters determined by many genes, you would be overwhelmed with letters from poultry breeders who have practical experience of its reality. But he can afford to dismiss what he calls " the usual gene mutation theory " because the data and calculations on which it is based are hidden away in obscure periodicals. It is not applied to agriculture because it would not pay individuals to apply it, though it would pay the State to do so were agriculture nationalised. It is not applied to man because it runs counter alike to current dogmas of racial and class superiority and of the equality of man. Similarly Mr. Watson can afford to use mechanism and materialism as almost synonymous terms because dialectical materialism, which is anti-mechanistic, is associated with " dangerous thoughts," and respectable people will have nothing to do with it.

If our existing biological knowledge were being applied, if, for example, we were taking as much trouble to supply our children with vitamins as our cars with oil, Mr. Watson would, I believe, be as impressed by the problems which materialistic biology has solved as he is now by those which it has so far left unanswered.

Mr. Mortimer's reply to Prof. Hogben contains a beautiful example of the detachment of scientific theory from practice. He asks whether astronomy and palaeontology bear fruit in action. Astronomy is so practical that in the past it made agriculture and navigation possible, and in recent years, by developing spectrum analysis, has been largely responsible for modern methods of illumination. Palaeontology is an extremely practical science extensively used in mining practice. Indeed it is suffering at present because the palaeontology of oil-bearing regions is in part a trade secret of competing trusts. Both astronomy and palaeontology have borne considerable fruit in action, and one cannot wonder at the existence of a crisis in the scientific thought of a civilisation where so well-educated a man as Mr. Mortimer is ignorant of this fact. J. B. S. HALDANE

Sir,—My letter in the last issue was written because I believe that the retreat from reason which is evident on all sides is the inescapable nemesis of an inherent dichotomy in our educational system. The training of the statesman and man of letters gives him no prescience of the technical forces which are shaping the society in which he lives. The education of the scientist and the technician leaves him indifferent to the social consequences of his own activities. In consequence it is nobody's business to take stock of the resources of knowledge now available for human welfare, and a younger generation which is increasingly attracted to violent extremes can hope for no intelligent leadership from those of us who are older. Action without thought is the offspring of thought divorced from action. One thing which stifles the growth of a new cultural outlook, harmonising the claims of humanistic scholarship and naturalistic inquiry instead of resting content with benevolent neutrality, is a current confusion between the private satisfaction which a few individuals derive from research or reading about it and the social significance which scientific discoveries have in the everyday life of everybody. Mr. Mortimer persists in this confusion by stating : " I am surprised that any scientist should write that ' it is the essential characteristic of scientific knowledge that it bears fruit of action.' Is astronomical knowledge not scientific ? "

Although I did not say that scientific knowledge always bears fruit in socially significant action—nor do I think so—Mr. Mortimer could hardly have chosen a more unfortunate example if he had wished to refute such a statement. Ten seconds' reflection will remind any of his readers that without astronomical knowledge it is impossible : (*a*) to construct the primary cultural necessity of a settled social existence—a calendar, (b) to prepare the primary cultural necessity of an international economy—a map, (*c*) to bring the Cape Town mail boat into Southampton on time. In short, astronomy makes it possible for Mr. Mortimer to date a letter, address a letter and post a letter with any confidence that it will arrive at its destination.

I have no space to traverse the significant part which these three themes played in the three great periods of astronomical discovery, the temple cultures of Egypt and Sumeria, the brilliant efflorescence which followed the campaigns of Alexander and the expansion of maritime intercourse at the close of the Middle Ages. The social interconnections of astronomical progress in the social context which revived the doctrine of Aristarchus, being less familiar, must suffice. No doubt Mr. Mortimer will feel that I have played right into his hands by bringing up the Copernican episode. I therefore offer the following considerations as food for reflection. The researches of Professor E. R. G. Taylor have shown us that the absorbing technical problem of the Great Navigations was how to determine longitude at sea without a chronometer, an instrument which was not perfected till about 1760. Fortunately we have a record of the way in which Amerigo Vespucci did so. When sighting America, he noted the local time of an occultation of Mars scheduled for midnight on the same day in a Nuremberg almanac. In the period which intervened between the publication of the *De Revolutionibus* of Copernicus and the *De Motibus Stellae Martis* of Kepler, no shred of evidence for the two fundamental postulates of the geocentric view had been discovered. Hipparchus had rejected the doctrine of Aristarchus for a quite adequate reason which was not disposed of till improvement of tool construction made it possible three centuries after the death of Copernicus to produce instruments capable of detecting the annual parallax of a near star. More than a century elapsed before Huyghens invoked the earth's diurnal rotation to explain why a clock set at Paris loses time at Cayenne. The geocentric view gained ground because in the hands of Copernicus it was a simpler, and in the hands of Kepler a more accurate, recipe for directing the human action involved in looking for a planet, and one evident reason why it did so was because almanacs which could provide simple and accurate recipes for such action happened to be urgently needed at the time. What considerations directed the personal interests of Copernicus himself do not concern me. Nor is it important to observe that Kepler took a lively interest in the technical problems of navigation. It may be that surgeons who enjoy inflicting pain are all the more efficient at their jobs. The reason why we employ them is because we believe that they can cure us. Why individual astronomers like looking at stars and Bloomsbury intellectuals derive amusement from knowing how hot they would be on Betelgueuse are not the reasons why governments maintain the observatories of which Sir James Jeans' entertaining arithmetic is a by-product. If Mr. Mortimer is serious in asking such a question, I counsel him to purchase the Nautical Almanac.

However, the part which social agencies have played in directing the progress of scientific discovery is not the major issue which Mr. Mortimer raises. He asks whether I seriously think that astronomy is a study which bears fruit in action. How could one possibly think otherwise if one had thought seriously about the implications of one's programme of action on any normal day of one's life, unless one believed that human beings know by instinct that the tropical year is 365 d. 5 h. 58 m. 45.98 secs. mean solar time and that the equation of time which governs all our railway system was delivered on Mount Sinai? Mr. Mortimer might as well ask whether I do not believe that the three hourly bulletins of a ship's location issued in the saloon of an ocean liner are worked out by telepathy. How is he able to be so sure that on July 1st, 1936, at 11 p.m. Greenwich Mean Time he will not need to use his head lamps or put on a fur coat? How does he know that it will still be dark at 7 a.m. Greenwich time and that he will need to wear warm underwear on February 29th, 1936? Does he contend that leap years are inserted for merely matrimonial reasons? Does he think that legal acumen without any assistance decides the limits of Abyssinia's territorial rights or when civil twilight ends? I suggest that Cidenas who is reputed to have discovered the Precession of the Equinoxes and Ptolemy who made the first observations on atmospheric refraction will be as much to blame as Justinian, if he ever finds himself charged with omitting to leave on his park lights. Even the unwillingness of Mussolini to state his terms is not unconnected with the observations of Eratosthenes.

I could give Mr. Mortimer equally good grounds for paying his taxes cheerfully to maintain palaeontological research in state museums and state-aided universities. Indeed, I wish I were entitled to extend him an official welcome to a course of lectures on the Social Background of the Scientific Outlook, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5.30 beginning October 8th. Let me assure Mr. Mortimer that it will not discourage the efforts of those who wish to create a science of ethics. If there were one, I conceive that it would deal with the roots of human action. When the researches of Dr. Myers have progressed a little we may be able to advise anxious parents to find useful employment at the slaughter market for bright boys whose natural talents would find an outlet in Jew baiting, if undirected into socially necessary tasks. Mr. Mortimer's entire failure to comprehend the standpoint of scientific humanism is shown by his readiness to associate it with the doctrine that man lives by bread alone. When the science of human nature has advanced along the lines which some of its students are now following, we may know something about human needs and how they can be accommodated. May we also hope for intellectuals who can contemplate without wistful and ineffectual regrets a future in which man does not live by Boswell?

LANCELOT HOGBEN

[Mr. Mortimer writes: Of course astronomy has been of practical use, but surely nine-tenths of astronomical knowledge is "useless." I wish that Professor Hogben instead of making his point at such length had explained just what he meant by "bearing fruit in action." If this is his criterion, which of the current scientific activities is he prepared to condemn? Does he for instance justify on grounds of "action" the new telescope which is to explore the outer fringes of the universe? The humanist regards the pursuit of truth as desirable, irrespective of the practical uses to which it may be put. I still cannot understand to what extent the "scientific humanist" holds the opposite opinion.—ED. *N.S. & N.*]

SIR,—Professor Hogben in his letter of your last issue suggests that I have invented a crisis in biological thought for my own controversial ends. I certainly cannot deny that it is possible that there may be biologists in this country who are so occupied with the "kind of knowledge which bears its fruits in action," that they are unaware that other biologists of repute have concentrated their attention on the reorganising of the opinions and facts which have already been collected. I would cite Ludwig von Bertalanffy, the author of *Kritische Theorie der Formbildung*, which work has been translated and revised by J. H. Woodger and published by the Oxford University Press, and Dr. E. S. Russell, the author of *The Interpretation of Development and Heredity*, and Messrs. W. E. Ritter and E. W. Bailey, the authors of *The Organismal Conception*, as instances of men of this type, and would refer Professor Hogben to their works. Bertalanffy's book was favourably received in Germany and in this country, and is packed full of the most closely written and closely reasoned material. I may be excused for quoting at some length:

> When we speak of a crisis in biology it will be understood that we are not in any way saying anything prejudicial to its value. *These general transformations in modern science signify rather the most powerful forward development which it has experienced since its foundation at the Renaissance.* But it is at the same time essential that this state of affairs should be clearly reviewed, and that no attempt should be made to conceal it by entrenching ourselves *behind theories which are now no longer tenable, or by shutting our eyes to the difficulties of our science.*

And further he quotes from Schaxel:

> Modern biology is not in a position to display the results of systematic research in a system of concepts, or to represent the orderly behaviour which is common to its objects in a general theory. The place of theoretical science is taken rather by a heterogeneous multitude of facts, problems, views and interpretations. . . . Such a state of affairs cannot be improved upon by piling up of new facts and opinions upon the old ones, but only by *a fundamental reorganisation after a process of careful sifting of those we already possess.*

The italics in both quotations are my own, and mark in no ambiguous terms a crisis in biological thought.

It is surprising that such an eminent scientist as Professor Hogben should, since he is concerned to notice my article at all, neglect to make any reference to Kohler, whose theory of *Gestalt* takes an important place in my argument, and that he should dismiss Aristotle's contribution to a problem which is still in process of development (as all living problems must be) on the ground that "he is no longer with us."

E. L. GRANT WATSON

HOW TO PREVENT DISEASE

SIR,—Mr. Bryant's letter in THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION for August 17th seems to me but a piece of special pleading. The B.M.A. Committee's Report, on the contrary, struck me as entirely unprejudiced, full consideration being given to all relevant facts, whether telling for or against the Committee's final decisions; whilst the decisions themselves are temperately and modestly put forward. Why will anti-vaccinationists and anti-vivisectionists so frequently queer their excellent case and lessen the convincingness of their arguments by futile endeavours to prove that no useful knowledge has been, or may be, derived from practices possibly in themselves spiritually unjustifiable? Where are the "overwhelming statistics" demonstrating the futility of active immunisation against diphtheria by modern methods? Who are the medical men who "tell us that the diphtheria germ is not present in from 14 to 40 per cent. of clinical cases of diphtheria"? And which are the "medical journals" wherein we may read about "the growing dangers" of disease resulting from immunisation against diphtheria? I believe that there is not a single record of a fatal or serious accident in England resulting from immunisation by toxoid. Lastly, why be so ready to assume bad faith in the doctors who, after a careful examination of all the available facts, have laid before the public the conclusions at which they have arrived? We usually draw inferences as to the motives of other people from consciousness of our own.

HARRY ROBERTS

Oakshott Hanger, Hawkley, Liss, Hants.

JEWS IN POLAND

SIR,—Did Critic think of asking the authority, who told him that a million Jews in Poland are under-nourished, what percentage of the total population falls into the same class? I doubt if the proportion of non-Jews in the same situation is smaller.

In Germany anti-Semitism is the main factor in the Jewish problem. In Poland anti-Semitism is a symptom rather than the root of the disease. The real problem is not the small class of Polonised Jews, whom the foreigner will meet socially, but the Jewish masses who are unlikely to become Polonised.

The gravity of the situation lies in the fact that economic progress may well bring further ruin, not improvement, for the Jewish masses.

In making the transition from a feudal society with hereditary class distinctions to a modern Liberal society Poland has been faced by a difficulty which never existed in France or England. One of the hereditary classes, that of the small trader and artisan, was and is alien not only in race and religion but in speech, national feeling, dress. The whole culture of the old Jewish society with its complete contempt for physical excellence (until recently all women shaved their heads on marriage and wore wigs for the rest of their lives) was alien and slightly disgusting to the Westerner, whether Gentile or Jew. This old culture is disappearing, indeed, but not before a tide of assimilation. On the contrary, the younger Jewish masses are becoming more, not less, nationalist. The Jews form from one-third to two-thirds of the population of every town outside former Prussian territory. The most important social and cultural unit in a predominantly agricultural country like Poland is the small town. How can the market town spread light amongst the villages as it should, if half the population of the town is alien in language, religion and thought to the peasantry?

The backwardness of Poland is, to a considerable degree, due to the presence of the Jews halfway down the social scale, preventing the gradual filtration of civilisation from the more educated to the less educated Polish classes. This is not the fault of the Jews. They suffer from it as much as the Poles in the long run. But it means that Polish-Jewish relations are smoothest where they are most hopelessly unprogressive, where the peasant is backward and has no ambitions, where the landowner does not manage his own estate, where there are no co-operatives.

The small Jewish dealer and pedlar has such a diminutive turnover that even to live very poorly he must make a big profit on every deal. In Posnania, where peasant co-operatives have reached a high degree of efficiency, he disappeared from the countryside and even from most of the towns a generation ago, under the Prussian regime. He found better scope for his talents in expanding German industry and trade—but only for a time! Economic progress in the Polish village is bound to deprive increasing numbers of Jews of their economic function—and Polish economic life is unlikely ever to expand sufficiently to reabsorb them.

They cannot be settled on the land. Poland is an over-populated country. A population map of Europe suggests to the cursory eye that the manufacturing area of central Germany and Silesia extends uninterrupted along the northern slopes of the Carpathians right into the Ukraine. Actually this is an almost purely agricultural area and only the eastern half of it has good soil. In Cracow province the agricultural population is twice as dense as in Germany or Denmark. Throughout Poland saturation point is being reached in the villages, unless cheap capital and markets can be made available.

There is, therefore, enormous blind pressure behind the Gentile attempt to enter professions which were mainly Jewish, and also behind the defensive action of those trying to keep Jews out of the professions or trades that have been mainly non-Jewish. Of the Pilsudski dictatorship it may be said, that with regard to the Jews it has at least not pandered to the anti-Semitic mob. I think moderate Jewish opinion in Poland recognises this. The younger generation of Poles, who have grown up in the economic depression and largely in a nationalist atmosphere, seem more inclined to anti-Semitism than their elders, so that the future is not bright.

No doubt emigration would be the ideal, but whither? There are three million Jews in Poland, mostly without agricultural experience and mostly pious. They do not want to go to the Soviet Republic of Biro-Bidjan, which cannot do more than solve the problem of the Jew-saturated areas of Soviet White Ruthenia and Soviet Ukraine. Only a small proportion can get into Palestine. Let us at least not poison the atmosphere further by telling underfed Poles that they are deliberately starving Jews. It will not help the Jews.

D. R. GILLIE

15 Quai Bourbon, Paris IV.

Miscellany

A SUMMER'S EVENING

SUPPER finished, the boy sat with his father and mother pretending to read, but the sound of music trickling through the open window made it difficult for him to concentrate. A band was playing in one of the parks and the noise of its gay, smashing notes, bouncing about amongst the infinitely dull and dusty pre-Raphaelite reproductions on the walls and the chipped blue and white china plates, was disquieting, reminding him of holiday crowds sauntering along a pier, of young men in flannels and gaudy blazers, with slicked back hair, promenading up and down, arm and arm with girls, whose bright summer dresses fluttered round their sun-browned legs.

For a time, only a few disconnected bars sneaked past the faded curtains, mingling with the voices of people in the road, and submerging into the steady artillery of his father's pipe, the infuriating crackling the evening paper made as he turned its pages, and the faint click of his mother's patience cards; then, strong and clear, it came again, a whole gusty bagful of brassy music tumbling in, exciting him. The band was filling the night with vaguely defined, heady promises; it was impossible to stay frousting indoors.

After a brief struggle he gave up. It was no use, he simply *must* go out. And why the devil shouldn't he anyway?

"I think I'll go for a little walk," he heard himself proclaim brusquely, hastily rising to anticipate the fussy questioning which inevitably followed when he showed any signs of possessing a life of his own. Nothing made him more sullen, more miserably rebellious, than being compelled to explain his every action to his parents.

"Oh, Lord, no," he called half out of the room, in reply to his mother's anxious "You won't be late, dear?" As he closed the door firmly behind him he heard the paper rustled ominously preparatory to some waggishly sarcastic announcement from his father; but he had been too quick for him this time, and was safe.

Don't be late indeed, he thought angrily as he hurried down the drive. It was so likely! Things never happened to make him late; he only wished they would, damn it!

At the gate he hesitated for a moment, frowning jealously at the close-linked couples, strolling along, heads together, waiting for the reddening sun to sink from the smoky blue sky; standing there, sensing the familiar hodge-podge of suburban smells—the suggestion of a hundred thousand dinners, the pleasant tang of soft tar melting in the heat, the acrid reek of cheap oil from the 'buses, the sweet smell of new mown grass and bonfires, a thin odour from dreary, disillusioned laurel bushes, so fixed and timeless—waiting irresolutely on the pavement, he was unable to make up his mind in which direction to go, until an extra loud burst of wind-borne rataplans from the band decided him: at least he would take a look at the park.

Swarms of people trampled over the seedy yellow grass—already, so early in the summer, blistered with patches of naked earth—and clustered thickly round a space which had been roped off for dancing. As he pushed in amongst them, laughing faces peered into his, smirking their challenge; all about him pert breasts, straining against tightly stretched jumpers, seemed to wink at him knowingly; panting girls jerked up their stockings and pulled at their clothes, brushing the damp hair out of their eyes, and shouting at the lounging youths, who, caps set at jaunty angles, were gathered near the ropes. There was an overwhelming sourness in the air, which was cheap powder and perspiring female flesh; gamey, tantalising; provocative, repellent.

All at once he wished he hadn't come; he knew he would never dare to speak to anyone in this jostling bank holiday crowd. The music had lost its magic; he would clear out.

But he could not go home; once having escaped, it was out of the question to return yet. He would go along to his grandfather's place.

A quarter of an hour's walk from the seething life of the bandstand, here he might have been in the country; it seemed almost incredible that such an estate could exist little more than a mile from the centre of the city. Keeping away from the house, he dived through some bushes into a narrow seldom used path, overgrown with brambles, the nettles shooting up as high as the tallest foxgloves. A sunning rabbit bolted down its burrow with a whisk of white; blackbirds fled noisily before him; a wood pigeon, loud-winged and panicky, whirred away, blundering into branches in its haste. Slipping over a gate, he was in the park.

A score of placid brown cows, knee-deep in the lake, their tails twitching, regarded him solemnly; rooks, beginning to return from the mysterious visits they paid during the day, ragged against the darkening sky, as they flapped slowly across the water in twos and threes, noticed his presence with gossipy concern, slightly altering their course to avoid flying above him; splashing deeper into the reeds, a moorhen called a shrill warning, which went echoing round the pool, causing a flotilla of wild duck to break into half-flight, rippling the water with the tips of their wings as they moved to the shelter of the willows overhanging the island.

Crossing a stile, his heart gave a bound; through the trunks of the elms he had caught sight of something white. As he approached he saw that two servant girls were leaning over the boundary fence gazing into the wood.

Lighting a cigarette, he strolled in their direction with an air of nonchalance he was far from feeling, and, after a mean little detour, passed close to them, endeavouring to break the ice. Slowly and more slowly he went until he was scarcely moving, then one of the girls solved the problem for him by calling, "Please, master, could you spare us a match?"

Quickly he returned, blushing. They had a packet of Woodbines, and, giggling, they lit up, leaning against the palings, smoking inexpertly.

Both were wearing uniforms, with stupid starched caps perched on their heads. They were very young, sixteen or seventeen, and one of them, he considered, was rather pretty; short and plump, with a high colour.

When at last he managed to find his voice it sounded strange and came croaking harshly out of the back of his throat: "It's a lovely evening. Why don't you take a walk in the park?"

"Oo, no," the pretty girl said, and for a second their eyes met before each turned hastily away. "Oo, no, that would be trespassing."

"And we got to be getting back now," said the other.

Under the trees it was growing dusk; the sun, a purple ball, was disappearing into the marsh at the end of the lake. For a long minute they all remained in silence, intensely conscious of one another, but tongue-tied, embarrassed, the girls puffing at their cigarettes, the boy searching desperately for something to say.

"Come on, Jen, it's getting late," said the bigger girl.

"I suppose I'd better be getting back, too," he said, doubtfully. But nobody moved.

"Come on, Jen," she said again.

Oh, God, he must find something to say, anything!

But: "Would you like some matches to take back with you?" was the best he could produce.

"Oo, no, we've got plenty in the house."

Still no one stirred.

"Come on, Jen, do."

"Goodnight, then, if you really must go," he said.

"Goodnight," they called, throwing away their wet cigarettes and running towards the wall of the garden.

At the gate the rounded girl turned and waved.

Through the dead leaves, which all the year round lay whispering in this corner of the wood, and over the dying bluebell plants, he started to walk home, not knowing whether to be pleased or sorry that the encounter had been so short and tame. Anyhow she had waved, that was something.

But, he told himself later, lying on top of his bed, confident and ardent in the warm darkness, if her friend had not been there, things would have been very different. He imagined pulling that silly rag off her hair, and . . .

Oh, blast! he thought, turning over on his side and closing his eyes tightly.

PETER CHAMBERLAIN

MUSIC IN SALZBURG

It is half-past nine in the evening of a perfect summer's day, and the baroque courtyard of the palace of the Archbishops is lit only by the candles on the music-desks of a small orchestra. Here, a century and a half ago, many of Mozart's works were first performed; now a cosmopolitan audience listens to the first Serenade of the Salzburg festival.

Nobody, I think, could devise a better setting for Mozart's music—a setting more subtly helpful in preparing people to listen closely. For the setting is not simply a baroque courtyard, nor is it an opera-house built by an enlightened rich man in his country garden; the setting is Salzburg itself, working upon us all day and for days on end, not only with its historical associations but with the ideal holiday life which it encourages us to lead. In this beautiful city among the lakes and mountains, one gets a glimpse of what peace should mean: of that happy civilised life which should be open for all human beings to lead for part of their time—and could be now, but for international anarchy and social injustice.

Such is the setting. But to those who wish to understand music all this would be worse than useless if the performances were unworthy. For the most part they are not.

Take first the Serenades. Four of these are given by the orchestra of the Mozarteum (the local academy of music) under Dr. Bernhard Paumgartner. At the first they played the divertimento in D major (K. 251), the march in D major (K. 237), the serenade in D major (K. 203), and the Deutsche Tänze (K. 571). The performance of these works was beyond criticism. Dr. Paumgartner, though he has not an "international reputation," is one of the seven or eight finest living musicians. He is doing for the divertimenti and serenades of Mozart what Schnabel is doing for the piano concertos. There is the same absolute clearness and purity of style, so that Mozart's own style is seen as participating in an eternal style common to all great music, and satisfies us in itself. But in addition all the drama of each work is present, and through Paumgartner's playing, as through Schnabel's, the immense difference between each movement and all others comes as a revelation. Those are, to my mind, the characteristics of great playing, and they are present in Paumgartner's interpretations.

Operas at the Salzburg festival are for the most part given by members of the Vienna Staatsoper with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Their work is important to everyone who is interested in music. In Vienna this spring I heard performances of *Figaro*, *Cosi fan Tutte* and *Seraglio*, in which the orchestra and five or six singers worked together like a string quartet. Many of the singers were first-rate in their solo work, some were not; but in Mozart's big *ensemble* passages they all rose to complete adequacy and, without sacrificing individuality, subordinated themselves to the true interpretation of the music. By maintaining this truthful tradition Vienna is keeping alive for the whole of Europe the art of opera at its highest. A singer who is only very promising goes to Vienna and, after two years in that school, is a real artist. By attracting or discovering new singers from provincial opera-houses throughout Europe and training them in its tradition, the Vienna opera not only gives performances worthy of great music but is doing to all European opera-houses—and to Covent Garden and the Metropolitan—the service of keeping up a supply of singers who are more than virtuosi. If anyone with money to spare desires to spend it on the art of opera, he should help the Vienna opera to continue undeflected.

In Salzburg so far I have heard *Cosi fan Tutte*, *Rosenkavalier* and *Don Giovanni*. The performance of *Cosi fan Tutte* was full of the chamber-music quality. Such performances are necessarily more moving than any others, just because they are truthful and fulfil the composer's intentions. Jarmila Novotna's singing and acting were glorious, and Lothar Wallerstein's scenery and production were worthy of the finest Russian ballets.

Anyone who has become doubtful about the *Rosenkavalier* would have come away from the performance here with renewed delight. In this again, in spite of the grandiose size of the orchestra and cast, there was a string-quartet quality. Of outstanding individuals, Adele Kern and Jarmila Novotna were the ideal Sophie and Oktavian—lovely in their appearance as well as in the purity of their singing and the subtlety of their acting; Lotte Lehmann, as the Marschallin, once more surpassed even herself; Charles Kullmann showed us the tenor's song in Act I as it really is—virtuoso's trickery transformed by Strauss into art—so that one was furious with Ochs for interrupting it. Joseph Krips, a conductor of tremendous intellectual grasp, reduced to their right proportions those passages in Acts II and III which are dull through excessive brilliance.

With this performance that of *Don Giovanni* is a disquieting contrast. Austria is now, in everything but name, an Italian protectorate, and for this opera the cast consisted largely of Italian singers. Their singing was pretentious, the general effect a mongrel misfit. There was none of the chamber-music attitude here, except in the orchestra under Bruno Walter, whose beautiful work, both as conductor and as harpsichordist accompanying the recitatives, it was difficult to hear. Prince Starhemberg's present Austrian Government professes to be a patriotic one; let us hope that it will not misuse the cultural agreement between Austria and Italy to destroy the Vienna opera—Vienna's one remaining glory—in the same way as Charles II destroyed English music by making trifles from France the fashion. That would mean an irreparable loss to the whole civilised world.

J. G.

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"Murder Man" at the Empire

Spencer Tracy has never, I think, acted so well as he does in this straightforward screen-play, a newspaper film which neatly puts across a drama of almost European seriousness under that crisp, polished coating of flippancy which we associate with the American cinema at its best. There is, it is true, in the big final scene a slight tendency to flaunt that tense, inarticulate avoidance of strong emotion which sidetracks it into banal speech and so throttles everything with sentiment. But this, after all, is in keeping with the character of Steve Grey, hard-boiled, hard-drinking ace of reporters on the *Daily Star*, whose daily fare is whisky, wisecracks, and the purple patches of yellow journalism. There is a murder in this film, a suicide, a court room scene, an impending execution, a last interview at the "Death House"—and plenty of jokes. Hollywood's appreciation of the raw, riotous efficiency of the American newspaper world always has a slight and enjoyable flavour of self-criticism; that is why personally we prefer the reporting racket to all gangster antics on the films. Its wise-guys are at least intelligible, and just as infallible, romantic, brutal and unlikely as the more avowed type of American criminal. They are detectives too; they outwit the cops and have hearts of gold. Their witticisms are as sly and scandalous, their important paper victories neater than wholesale shootings, almost as noisy and twice as cynical. Still, I cannot give away the story of *Murder Man* . . . So let me say that it was well directed by Tim Whelan, perfectly acted by the whole cast, and given feeling by Tracy and Virginia Bruce. We were shown first a British film, *Dance Band*, which borrowed largely from *Streamline*. It boasted better dialogue than usual (Technical, Creative and Investigating Studio Staffs, take notice) and would have been frankly terrible but for the comic charm of Steve Geray (Hungarian).

THE COMING WEEK

MONDAY, August 26th—
"The Man Who Knew Too Much," Everyman Cinema, Hampstead.
"Pygmalion," Cambridge Theatre.

TUESDAY, August 27th—
"Round About Regent Street," Palladium.

THURSDAY, August 29th—
"Youth at the Helm," Liverpool Playhouse.

FRIDAY, August 30th—
Prague International Fair. Till September 8th.

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Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

JEAN COCTEAU is far too gifted to be taken seriously. He writes poetry, plays, novels, criticism; he draws, he acts, he produces plays and films. If he had been content with one of these activities, he would be a prosperous personage with a red rosette in his buttonhole. But such a variety of talents is disconcerting, in fact it must be a proof of mere dilettantism. Who ever heard any good of Dante's pictures, Raphael's sonnets, the violin-playing of Monsieur Ingres? Jack of all trades is master of none, etc., etc. Human envy can always find a proverb with which to condemn what is rare and unaccountable. But in fact Cocteau is one of the most unamateur persons I know, for his work is always governed by an acute sense of the material in which he is working. His film, *Le Sang d'un Poète* is amateurish in the sense that it was made with small resources, but it is the most purely cinematic film that has yet been produced—a careful exploitation of the possibilities peculiar to the cinema. And in *La Voix Humaine* Cocteau deliberately stripped himself of his verbal felicity and wrote a play which was nothing to read, but which provided an occasion for virtuoso acting—a prodigiously professional affair (too much so indeed) which very properly was acted at the Comédie Française. He would describe himself as a poet, his works are classified as "poésie de roman," "poésie critique," "poésie de théâtre," "poésie graphique," and so on. But he is a poet who knows that verse is made with words, drawings with lines, films with shots. The amateur has ideas, the professional knows that an idea can hardly be said to exist until it is incorporated. It is Cocteau's privilege—and his material misfortune—that he can give body to his poetry in a variety of forms.

* * *

One might define his poetry as mystery revealed with wit. Revealed but not explained, for he sees mystery everywhere and accepts it. The weak poet sees beauty only in the past, or in hills and waters which have remained unchanged; in fact he can see poetically only where earlier poets guide him, and since Virgil and Shakespeare and Wordsworth never saw a motor or an operating-table or a telephone he regards these as intrinsically less poetical material than older instruments like the plough, the spinning-wheel and the sail. Cocteau makes no such distinctions. Death used to be naturally figured as a skeleton with a scythe, when it was usual to see bones hanging on a gibbet and hay being mown with a swinging crescent of steel. But hay is now cut with a machine, and the only skeletons we ever see are anatomical specimens. So when Cocteau places Death upon the stage, it is as a surgeon, aseptic in white clothes and rubber gloves, a guise in which she has presented herself to most of us, a symbol actual, elegant, and terrifying. Claudel's *Soulier de Satin* seems to me probably the best contemporary poetry in dramatic form. But as poetic drama, that is to say as poetry written in terms of the theatre, I think *Orphée* and *La Machine Infernale* are unsurpassed in our time. (They are written in prose, but they are poetry.)

* * *

Cocteau's new book, *Portraits-Souvenir*, 1900–1914 (Grasset, 15 *fr.*) is his first adventure into journalism. It is a collection of articles which appeared in the *Figaro*, and though the author inevitably looks at the past with a poet's eye, he is carefully looking at what in it may be of interest to a large public, well-known figures and fashions of life. The pre-war twentieth century is a most obscure period except to the elderly. It is not yet safely incorporated in history, and we remember it through a child's eyes or not at all. Nor has it yet aged into picturesqueness—its taste seems to us deplorable. But Cocteau, who has always been abreast of the times (or rather a stroke ahead of them), protests against the too easy joke. He gives the period admirably:

> Certes, les chardons hiératiques du cuir repoussé, les iris de l'âcre pyrogravure de notre enfance ont été rejoindre le panier d'où s'écroulent les framboises de Madeleine Lemaire, les pivoines que ma soeur Marthe peignait au cours d'aquarelle, en suçant son pinceau et en déclamant les tirades de Cyrano de Bergerac. . . . Il me serait trop facile de vous rappeler la pointe sèche de Helleu qui decorait les chambres de jeunes filles à mobilier de ripolin blanc: une dame cambrée contre son ombrelle comme les héroïnes de Maupassant l'étaient contre un bastingage (mouette sur le chapeau, mouettes sur les vagues, mouettes partout) . . .

Too easy, so he reminds us that *Pelléas* and the paintings of Renoir belong to the same period, and had a relation to it:

> N'oublions pas, non plus, que la beauté frivole de la mode et de ses recherches inspire la beauté grave ou s'inspire d'elle et qu'il y rencontre des prodiges qui restent des prodiges, ne pouvant exciter que le rire des personnes qui subissent la mode sans comprendre sa loi tragique. La mode meurt jeune, et cet air condamné qu'elle a, lui donne de la noblesse.

And then, like a Bossuet or a Bourdaloue—one must never forget that rhetoric is one of the principal subjects in French education—he breaks into a passage of remarkable *bravura* upon this frivolous subject—he has been talking of the quick-motion films of growing flowers:

> Il faudrait filmer de la sorte les époques lentes et les modes qui se succèdent. Alors, ce serait vraiment saisissant, de voir, à toute vitesse, les robes s'allonger, se raccourcir et se rallonger, les manches se gonfler, se dégonfler, se regonfler, les chapeaux s'enfoncer et se retrousser, et se jucher, et s'aplatir, et s'empanacher, et se désempanacher, les poitrines grossir et maigrir, provoquer et avoir honte, les tailles changer de place entre les seins et les genoux, la houle des hanches et des croupes, les ventres qui avancent et qui reculent, les dessous qui collent et qui écument, les linges qui disparaissent et qui réapparaissent, les joues qui se creusent et qui s'enflent, et pâlissent, et rougissent, et repâlissent, les cheveux qui s'allongent, qui disparaissent, qui repoussent, qui frisent, se tirent et moussent, et bouffent, et se dressent, et se tordent, et se détordent, et se hérissent de peignes et d'épingles, et les abandonnent, et les réadoptent, les souliers qui cachent les orteils ou les dénudent, les soutaches qui se nouent sur les laines piquantes, et la soie vaincre la laine, et la laine vaincre la soie, et le tulle flotter, et le velours peser, et les paillettes étinceler, et les satins se casser, et les fourrures glisser sur les robes et autour des cous et montant, et descendant, et bordant, et s'enroulant avec la nervosité folle des bêtes qu'on en dépouille.

This passage seems to me not merely eloquent but truly imaginative.

* * *

Cocteau gives a dazzling picture of the Palais de Glace, where the *grandes cocottes* valsed with skates attached to their Louis Quinze heels. Otero and Cavalieri, Bernhardt and Réjane, Sem and de Max, Isadora Duncan and Loie Fuller, Catulle Mendès (looking like a lion, a turbot and Heine), Cosima Wagner in tears at a revival of *La Belle Hélène*, Cocteau with his opera-glass picks them up in turn and leaves some detail pinned to our memory. There is a moving glimpse of the Empress Eugénie in a hotel room overlooking the Tuileries, reminding two old members of her Court of the extravagant fashions of the Empire. And perhaps best of all, a dazzling portrait of the poetess, Anna de Noailles, attached to glory as Venus to her prey. "'Anna', lui dis-je, 'vous voulez être de votre vivant un buste, mais avec des jambes pour courir partout!'" And at the end of an argument she fires down the staircase the final shot—"Du reste, c'est simple. Si Dieu existe, je serais la première à en être avertie!" And she talks, talks, talks, till everyone at a huge party collects round her, and the footmen gather at the door to listen, and her words cascade from windows into the summer night, and even the chauffeurs in the street whisper "La contesse parle." I never, alas, heard her talk, but I have heard Cocteau often, not at big parties but in quiet restaurants and the small hotel bedrooms where he usually lives. I have never heard talk which could compare with his. And in this book he writes as he talks, elaborately but without effort, fireworks without noise, tight-rope walking without a pole, a magician pretending to be a conjurer, the poet of Oedipus and Orpheus and Antigone remembering past fashions and dead women "with such hair, too."

RAYMOND MORTIMER

NEW NOVELS

The House in Paris. By Elizabeth Bowen. *Gollancz.* 7*s.* 6*d.* (Published on August 26th.)

Of Time and the River. By Thomas Wolfe. *Heinemann.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

La Comédie de Charleroi. By Drieu La Rochelle. *Gallimard.* 15 fr.

Several years have passed since Mrs. Woolf administered a rousing rap over the knuckles to masculine critics perverse or doltish enough to imagine that the scope of a woman writer's genius and the limitations imposed by her sex could in some way be connected. There was no such thing (one gathered) as "feminine" talent; nor were there any realms of literary greatness to which a woman, given a room of her own, a small private income and freedom from the odious and agelong tyranny of fathers, husbands and brothers, might not aspire. . . . Unfortunately for Mrs. Woolf's spirited protest, there are very few modern woman writers—least of all, Virginia Woolf herself—whose work can be produced in support of her theory; and it has often struck me that the finest woman novelists were precisely those who—like Mrs. Woolf—allowed their feminine characteristics the fullest play, who were unashamedly feminine on every page. George Sand is a type of the novelist who discards her petticoats; Jane Austen of the writer who triumphs through the fact of her sex.

Miss Elizabeth Bowen belongs to the latter group. 1934 saw the publication of her brilliant collection of short stories, *The Cat Jumps*; and readers who had missed her previous volumes must then have realised that they were face to face with an uncommonly distinguished and extremely original feminine talent. Miss Bowen has an exquisite feeling for words; "The Disinherited," probably the best story of *The Cat Jumps*, managed to describe an assemblage of queer, ill-assorted, unpleasant characters, and to reproduce the atmosphere of their surroundings, with a verbal economy of which any novelist might be proud. I am not sure that, taken as a whole, *The House in Paris* is quite so satisfying a production as "The Disinherited," "Her Table Spread," or "The Last Night in the Old Home"; yet it is a provocative and lively piece of work. Here is a book one can recommend with perfect honesty—an unusual and refreshing experience in the reviewer's career!

The House in Paris is a sandwich of present and past. We begin with "The Present," which engrosses us for the space of some seventy pages, then plunge back into "The Past"—a much thicker section of the narrative—finally reverting to "The Present" for the last episode. A little girl, on her way to join her grandmother at Mentone, is escorted across Paris by a timid middle-aged lady with whom her grandmother has scraped acquaintance some years before. Between trains, she spends the day at Mlle. Fisher's house and there meets a little boy—also a visitor—who has travelled up from Italy on a mysterious errand. It transpires that he is illegitimate and is expecting to meet his mother, from whom he has been parted in early childhood. So far, the narrative is extraordinarily successful. The description of the drive across Paris, and of Henrietta's arrival at the stuffy, over-furnished, commonplace yet slightly sinister French house, is wonderfully well done; and the dialogue of the two children—cold, inquisitive, but restricted by all the conventions of ceremonies and suspicious infancy—brings the little monsters to life in a few phrases. Seldom have I met children so appallingly life-like. Miss Bowen is much too adroit an artist to sentimentalise over Leopold and Henrietta—even in the modern fashion, by stressing their lack of sentiment—but they emerge, sharp and definite, from the dusk of the house. One recognises the unreasoning cruelty of primitive childhood, before adolescence has begun to blur and soften its edge.

The second section is less successful than the first. Leopold was not to meet his mother—not that afternoon, at least. But suppose that she *had* met him. Suppose (which was obviously impossible) that she had been able to explain the accident of his birth. . . . What would she have said? Miss Bowen pieces together his pre-natal history; but the result, though very readable, is considerably less convincing than the section that goes before. There are passages—notably, several long paragraphs introducing "The Past"—that seem a little diffuse; and, at its best, the strength of Miss Bowen's prose style lies in its clarity and concision, its power of evoking an atmosphere without any sense of strain or any employment of unusual, involved or over-elaborate turns of speech. Yet the realistic tone soon recovers. Karen (we learn) had broken away from the "niceness" of a charming, prosperous, upper-middle-class English family to enjoy a love-affair with the attractive but unpresentable young man to whom Naomi Fisher was engaged. Leopold was the product of their brief encounter—a knowing child, already haunted by the mystery of his parentage.

The House in Paris, unlike ninety-nine out of every hundred novels published at the present day, is a book worth buying because, once read, there are passages—fragments of description, scraps of dialogue—that the purchaser will be anxious to read again. He will not return, I am afraid, with much eagerness to *Of Time and the River*. Mr. Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward Angel* created a good deal of interest on both sides of the Atlantic some years back; and his new book is a work of enormous length—it runs to nine hundred closely printed pages, thirty-nine lines to the page—written in a pretentious and inflated style. Mr. Wolfe is ponderously sincere; he is vehemently in earnest, hugely impressed by the importance of what he is saying—by the tragedy, splendour and corruption of contemporary life—so much so that he becomes almost inarticulate. Take, for example, his comparatively restrained and, indeed, slightly wistful description of English autumn weather:

> Smoke-gold by day, the numb exultant secrecies of fog, a fog-numb air filled with the solemn joy of nameless and impending prophecy, an ancient yellow light, the old smoke-ochre of the morning, never coming to an open brightness—such was October in England that year. Sometimes by night in stormy skies there was the wild, the driven moon, sometimes the naked time-far loneliness, the most—oh!—most familiar blazing of the stars that shine on men forever, their nameless, passionate dilemma of strong joy and empty desolation, hope and terror, home and hunger, the huge twin tyranny of their bitter governance—wandering for ever and the earth again.

A reader who enjoys the above passage may be expected to enjoy the remainder of this vast, emphatic, violent yet curiously vacuous book—the story (lit up, here and there, by flashes of straightforward descriptive brilliance) of a young American who gets into any number of scrapes, leaves America, seeking he knows not what, only to return exultantly at the end of the volume.

Mr. Wolfe should take a lesson from M. Drieu la Rochelle. One hates to imagine what Mr. Wolfe would have made out of a European war—the sprawling paragraphs that would have multiplied beneath his pen, the leaden volumes that would have thundered from the press. How clear-headed, how well-mannered is the French novelist! *La Comédie de Charleroi*, which has not yet been translated into English, but has earned a considerable reputation on the other side of the Channel, is surely one of the best war books that have yet been written. Here is war considered from a dispassionate, non-hysterical and entirely unheroic point of view:

> La guerre n'est plus la guerre. Vous le verrez un jour, fascistes de tous pays quand vous serez planqués contre terre, plats, avec la chiasse dans votre pantalon. Alors il n'y aura plus de plumets, d'ors, d'éperons, de chevaux, de trompettes, de mots, mais simplement une odeur industrielle qui vous mange les poumons. La guerre moderne est une révolte maléfique de la matière asservie par l'homme. Comment vous défendez-vous contre un tremblement de terre? En fuyant.

The cynicism of the narrator in the first episode is contrasted with the sentimental chauvinism of the rich, middle-aged French widow, Madame Pragen, who drags him off to the battlefields to search for the grave of her only son—who pretends to suffer, but luxuriates in her bereavement. The book is well-written, quietly caustic—a welcome refuge from other books of the same kind.

Peter Quennell

REPRESSION IN SPAIN

What I Saw in Spain. By Leah Manning. *Gollancz.* 5s.

The problem of Spain is the problem of rudimentary social justice, and the lack of it will drive the country sooner or later into violent social revolution. So one feels, so everyone feels in his bones: our political ladies of the Left, our Protestants who are longing to say "I told you so," and our Catholics who are in continuous, indignant dread of the crash. Moreover, Lenin prophesied it. Yet it never happens. Even last October with Catalonia and the Asturias well supplied with arms and in bloody revolt, nothing happened except more social injustices and cruelty. Where is the error in our logic? The case of Lenin is relatively simple; he forgot that the Jews had been expelled in the fifteenth century. And ourselves, we make the mistake of saying Spain, when there are as many Spains as there are regions, indeed as many Spains as there are Spaniards—a remark which sounds merely witty but is devastatingly true and almost impossible for Englishmen to understand. There have never been any successful revolutions in Spanish history—there was nothing revolutionary in the establishment of the Republic—the Reconquest and the *dos de mayo* were Nationalist risings and the communeros were defeated. Spain is always in a situation where the main facts are much less important than the imponderables, where conditions and individuals are more important than ideas. It is one of those countries which, with Ireland and Russia, break the heart and ruin the minds and lives of the logical foreigner—he who invites himself or has been invited to help.

Mrs. Manning's book is a Socialist's guide to the last major Spanish revolts—those of Asturias and Catalonia in the autumn of last year. In one more country the workers had risen against a Dollfus Fascism and had been heavily and cruelly repressed. It was mainly to investigate the character of the repression that Mrs. Manning went. She saw the Socialists in Madrid in and out of the Cárcel Modelo and then went up with friends and an interpreter to Oviedo. Here one or two workers talked darkly of ten thousand rifles oiled and buried in the mountains for the next attempt; but the main story was of devastated male population, tortures in prison, and Catholic societies taking the orphaned children of the miners into convents for general baptism. And the detailed reports of police and army atrocities sent by Srs. Alvarez del Vayo Fernando de los Rios and Ordas to the Spanish government, published in English for the first time, make it even worse. Even Sr. Lerroux said that if a tenth were true it would be infamous but of course had done nothing about it. This is not so much political wickedness as very Spanish.

We can be pretty sure of that tenth. The Spaniard has a revengeful character. He is dramatic and then forgets. The mutilated bodies of the common grave of Carbavin—split heads, tongues pulled out, deep stabs in the body—are undeniable. They were dug up. Witnesses are available of beatings, *bain Marie*, hangings, testicle twistings and other tortures. On the other hand even the hysterical, Catholic *A.B.C.* has been able to find little or nothing of atrocities on the part of the miners. And this is natural. They were in their own country. The story of the repression of working class movements does not vary much from country to country; and before Englishmen congratulate themselves, they should remember apparently nice people like Hamar Greenwood and the Black and Tans which had even Quakers in their ranks.

It would be absurd, however, to regard Mrs. Manning as an unbiased witness. She has the easily raised emotions of the ill-informed. Her book is investigation weighted with propaganda and hearsay; she did not speak Spanish; she saw mainly Socialists; she accepted her facts from them. As far as they refer to politics they are accurate enough up to a point, but important facts are omitted. Visiting Spain for the first time and having the usual blindness to character, endemic in the politically minded, she seems to have been carried away by the facial fervour of her friends, their flashing eyes and fervent gestures. She might have seen the same exalted manner in Fascists, priests and peanut vendors. Finally Mrs. Manning—who is a J.P.—has original views on evidence:

> Satisfied as *we* were with the stories told us, I am nevertheless prepared to admit that they may not be regarded as evidence by persons whose sympathies are bourgeois or reformist.

Her account of the political antecedents of the revolt is necessarily brief. She does not mention the important paradox that the municipal elections which dethroned Alfonso revealed a big Monarchist majority nor does she examine its significance. She fails adequately to distinguish between the nature of the Asturian and Catalan revolts, or to note that while Anarchism is the weakness of the Spanish working class movement, the greater weakness is the impossibility of getting an Andalusian to help an Asturian or a Catalan to do anything except for Catalan nationalism. In Extremadura, where conditions are far worse than in the Asturias, no one rose. Why? There had been a good harvest. Then in her account of the educational problem, she does not mention that thousands of young men and women were given a hurried training and then had no schools to go to; they had not been built fast enough.

Allowing for these serious defects the book has the value of bringing important aspects of the Spanish situation before the English public. Mrs. Manning was in Spain last December; thousands of people are still in gaol untried; and while in the amiable Spanish fashion an amnesty even for those serving twenty year sentences will eventually come, the present state of affairs is disgraceful.

V. S. PRITCHETT

What's all this about

books for the holiday? Kindly and well-meaning friends have been telling us that we ought to publish a list of books suitable for taking to the seaside: others, by the way, have been writing and telling us that our advertisements are "intolerably impudent," and will we please send them a catalogue at once. But that's by the way. What we want to impress on you is that you don't need to be reminded to take our books with you. All life as it is lived in a capitalist state is an advertisement for us. There isn't a clerk at Torquay who doesn't suffer in one way or another—even if from his self-cultured snobbery—from the evils and injustices of our system. Maybe he likes it: maybe all the clerks in all the so-called watering places around the coast like it. We don't know.

All we know is that we have published a book it would do them—and you—good to read. Title: *Clerical Labour in Britain.* Price: the same as a seat in a hot and snob cinema—to wit 3/6. Why not read it? Your blood—if you really have any—can't be far off boiling point in this weather, anyway. And it'll do you good. Woolly thinking and the hope that a faint tinge of pink in your piddling little politics may earn you a martyr's crown won't get you anywhere. History—say what you like—has proved over and over again that the Marxist analysis is correct. Well, here is the Marxist analysis of one of the most rotten of all the rotten rungs in our social ladder. Of course, if you're not interested in your own destiny don't worry about it. We have, though, a faint hope that you're not so inert as you like to appear. Don't forget: *Clerical Labour in Britain.* The author? He's a man called Klingender.

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THE TEN STOREY TOWN

The New Architecture and the Banhaus. By WALTER GROPIUS. Translated by P. MORTON SHAND. *Faber and Faber.* 6*s.*

"The full consciousness of my responsibility . . ." "the immensity of the mission of the architects of my own generation. . ." These are two expressions from the mild logical statement of what is meant by architecture, that Professor Gropius makes. For he thinks of an architect "as a co-ordinator—whose business it is to unify the various formal, technical, social and economic problems that arise in connection with building."

You have only to read the eighty pages of large type to be convinced that he is right.

After outlining the constructional possibilities given to architecture by glass and steel, Professor Gropius turns to the subject of standardisation. At the Banhaus, which is now no more, pupils were taught by designers and craftsmen to produce standard designs of everyday objects such as lamp fixtures, teacups, fabrics and chairs. These were made with an eye to mass production. German manufacturers bought Banhaus designs and the result is that most modern flats and houses in Germany have nothing so repulsively pretentious to show as the various modernistic designs which glisten in many a British parlour, the smartistic inspiration of some purely commercial workshop.

Would that Professor Gropius would re-found a Banhaus in England! But I think it unlikely that the individualism of British industry could be broken down by such an excellent institution.

This book is full of important suggestions. The author advocates prefabricated houses. Prefabrication is obviously essential in any industrial country where populations are removed and rehoused at a moment's notice regardless of the time of year. Pleasant looking houses which can be transported anywhere, put up and taken down again and removed to a more useful site, are illustrated in this book. Yet in England we still go on building rows of only too substantial villas in districts where, for all we know, they will be no longer needed in ten years' time.

All architects, in the wide sense that Professor Gropius is an architect, have some theory about town planning. It is all too easy to plan out a town on an unbuilt piece of ground, with its industrial, domestic, and official sections neatly spaced among belts of sunny greenery. Professor Gropius offers one important suggestion which can apply directly to the present chaos of a town like London. He says: "The height limit imposed by regulations is an irrational restriction which has hampered evolution in design."

He explains why. Tenements (and, for that matter, New York skyscrapers) have fallen into disrepute because the interva's between the blocks are too narrow and the lower storeys remain in darkness all day. But Professor Gropius regards the flat system as the only solution to "that most burning and baffling problem of all—town planning." He publishes some remarkable facts about the spacing of blocks of flats on a circumscribed area.

> Given an equal angle of light between the blocks (say 30 degrees) the amount of utilisable area *increases* with the number of storeys. In comparison with two-storied, ten-storied blocks have over 60 per cent. more utilisable superficial area; and this in spite of the fact that they enjoy the same amount of light and air.

He considers eleven storeys the ideal height for office blocks as compared with ten storeys for domestic ones. This presupposes, of course, that there is the correct minimum distance between the blocks.

There is not space here to elaborate on the admirably clear case Professor Gropius makes for ten and eleven storey blocks in town planning. Obviously it is the only solution for so small an island as Britain, if any greenery is to be left.

The New Architecture is not only a book for architects. It is a book that everyone can read and I am sorry that it has not been produced in a cheap popular edition, possibly with only one or two of the illustrations.

Mr. P. Morton Shand's translation has made a book which might have been oppressively technical, clear and easy reading. There is none of the jargon of architectural journalism. I spotted that silly word "architectonic" only twice. Once it was in Mr. Frank Pick's introduction.

This book is a change from the comic anger of Sir Reginald Blomfield and the delicate aesthetic shiverings of Mr. Goodhart-Rendel, because it has something to say that will make even an architectural student sit up. It tells us about something more important than "the battle of the styles," and that is the battle we must fight for an ordered existence. JOHN BETJEMAN

DANCING PHILOSOPHY

Russian Ballets. By ADRIAN STOKES. *Faber and Faber. 7s. 6d.*

What separates the ballet from mere acrobatics done to music? What is it that brings it within the range of the arts, for which it is clearly becoming almost the chief focus? Such were the questions raised by *To-night the Ballet*. Mr. Stokes's new book makes easier reading than anything he has yet done, and looks like having far greater popularity. It is certainly his most generally useful and also his least apparently ambitious piece of writing. It supplies an interesting analysis and commentary on eight ballets, with notes on many more. It is humorous, imaginative, and always unexpected; one has the feeling of going to Covent Garden with a philosopher who is also a wit, with a poet who is also yourself, so that you see through his eyes. Occasionally very complicated dance movements and stage effects have to be described, and this is done in vivid and exciting prose.

Those who know him from *The Thread of Ariadne*, *The Quattrocento*, or *The Stones of Rimini* will perhaps, indeed, be surprised to find that the author's search for his ideal has led him to abandon Charmides and Giorgione, and lured him to the auditorium of Covent Garden to report on the combined effect of ballet-skirts and Tchaikowsky's music. Were Mr. Stokes the hero of a novel, this sequence would seem perhaps natural; the young idealist's descent from the heights of philosophy into the world of men and women, with an interval of meditation in Italy. It is reasonable to suppose that any thinker who develops his own ideas consistently in his books, who soliloquises to a fault, is really always an autobiographer. Indeed, Mr. Stokes began as one in *The Thread of Ariadne*, his first and most successful book apart from the present. But for whatever reason, he certainly did cease after that to exploit his own personality in his books. It was clearly never the kind which shines in company or makes the author a figure in society. Except in their special aviaries at Oxford and Cambridge, the eagles of thought seldom consort with their kind, and probably Mr. Stokes is as seldom seen at Oxford as at the Zoo. His personality as a writer is unmistakably aquiline. He soars; he swoops; his very faults are predatory, and he sometimes tears a carcase to pieces in a way which makes one long for the company of birds who sip and look up and do not get so much to grips. But there were signs in *The Stones of Rimini* that Mr. Stokes was descending a little from the heights to within human reach. Now he is on terra firma; if he treads it rather as with the feet of an ex-airman, we shall look forward with all the more curiosity to his next book; for he is still volatile and may be expected to turn up anywhere. One doubts if it will be at the Russian Ballet, though it would be sad never to see that striking and solitary figure again there.

DICTATORS

The Way of the Dictators. By LEWIS BROAD and LEONARD RUSSELL. With an introduction by D. LLOYD GEORGE. *Hutchinson. 12s. 6d.*

Everyone, whatever his politics, is interested in the Cromwells and Napoleons who have been infesting Europe since 1917. Their admirers like to trace the steps by which they rose to power, and their enemies search for signs of their imminent downfall. In a book dealing with one or more of these prodigies, the reader will look first for new information and then for original thought. In *The Way of the Dictators*, having found neither, he will content himself with a readable summary of the more important, or accessible, books and newspaper articles on the persons dealt with, namely, Hitler, Mussolini, Dollfuss, Alexander of Jugoslavia, Kemal Ataturk, Pilsudski, Roosevelt, Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin.

In their concluding chapter the authors ask: "What then is England's fate in this brave new world? Must she too pass

"It is worth more than a whole shelf of popular and fashionable rubbish."
—WILLIAM PLOMER.

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"A stirring tale of raids, jealousies, friendships, loves, all salted with the oddity of primitive custom."
—GERALD GOULD (*Observer*).

HARRAP

under the sway of a dictator? Must the Mother of Parliaments perish? Will democracy fail in the land that gave it birth?" Their answer to this question reflects the muddled attitude of a great many Englishmen to the present dictatorships in Europe. "It has," they write, "emerged from our examination that democracy failed in Italy and Germany, because it was an alien tradition introduced on a foreign model. Let the future ruler of England remember that dictatorship is alien to the English race and tradition." Dictators are not a speciality of any particular country. They are produced by the effort of a nation to rise out of chaos, muddle and humiliation. The decadence of France after Louis XIV produced Bonaparte, the decadence of England after Elizabeth produced Cromwell, and the disorder and disasters in Russia, Germany, Italy and Turkey have produced Lenin, Hitler, Mussolini and Kemal. Dictatorships are a fever from which the patient may eventually derive some benefit. They are not a regimen by which a nation can preserve its health. England has had a dictator once, and if she had lost the war would not have been saved from a dictatorship by any abstract regard among Englishmen for the Mother of Parliaments.

In an introductory letter to this book, Mr. Lloyd George, who did his best in 1918 to reduce England to the state of mass imbecility at which dictatorships become feasible, says that we have "cause to congratulate ourselves here upon our success in combining individual liberty with order and stability of government. You have been right to dwell in your book upon the loss of rights and the restraint of liberty which are suffered by the people in the lands of the dictators." That Mr. Lloyd George has read *The Way of the Dictators* with some attention appears from the fact that he quotes the tribute the authors pay to his Unemployment Insurance Act. But their enthusiasm for the dictators whom he has failed to emulate appears to have escaped him. "Where," they ask, "is the faith of England? We have lost faith to-day. Where shall we find faith to-morrow? Italy and Germany lost faith and found a new faith in their dictators." Mr. Broad and Mr. Russell are suffering from the prevalent delusion that it is better to have a foolish faith than no faith at all. To believe in a dictator is to disbelieve in oneself, and in a country where energy is not expressing itself through the individual, it will sooner or later find a collective expression in war. The so-called autocrat is as powerless to check this development as any of the millions who believe in his semi-divine nature. He may think he is being guided by the Old Testament, or by the ideas of '89, or by Karl Marx, or by Nietzsche, or by Hobbes or by Houston Chamberlain. What is really driving him forward is the need of the millions he has stupefied to find an outlet for the energy they are unable to transmute in individual achievement.

HUGH KINGSMILL

POSITIVE ECONOMICS

The Economics of Stationary States. By A. C. PIGOU. *Macmillan.* 12s. 6d.

The layman is likely to be startled by the statement in the introduction that this is an essay in positive economics as distinguished from welfare economics. Remembering Professor Pigou as the distinguished author of an authoritative treatise on the *Economics of Welfare* he may inquire bitterly whether there are now two sorts of the forbidding science to study. Is this new work to be used, as sundry references in it would seem to indicate, in conjunction with the *Economics of Welfare*? Is it the prolegomena to a revised version of the latter? If our layman has dipped into such works as Professor Robbins' *Nature and Significance of Economic Science* he may pertinently ask whether there is any separate branch of welfare economics.

Economists have been particularly busy of late sharpening the tools of their science and discovering in the process that they have to discard many of the old gauges. One of the gauges likely to be jettisoned is the measurement of collective welfare, the summation of the social dividend. Already it is a *bêtise* in advanced seminars to use the terms good or bad, better or worse, and even more or less, in the analysis of economic movements, and, to take an example, there is a tacit if not open admission that the case for or against free trade is not to be derived from the content of the science itself. The ordinary person may retort that he has noticed no softening or modification in the voices that thunder from the economic Sinai, but that is because in public controversy the economist is still confronted with such propositions as that tariffs will simultaneously reduce imports, expand exports, strengthen the exchanges, raise the standard of living, cure unemployment, cement the bonds of Empire, and shake the yoke of everlasting tears from this world wearied flesh. For such stuff the ancient weapons in the armoury still suffice.

How narrow and rigid can the postulates of an objective study be made and still leave any significance in such concepts as real income, output, optimum size of production centre, and even work? In Chapter V Professor Pigou discusses the concept of real income and excludes the part provided in what he calls a non-commercial way: services rendered freely between friends and relatives, and services rendered to their owners by any durable goods they possess, save only dwelling houses. It is doubtful whether this discussion is at all pertinent to an objective study of human behaviour as conditioned by scarcity, but in any case one cannot agree that the paradoxes which arise from this arbitrary definition need not lead to confusion in the analysis. Similarly, in Chapter XII Professor Pigou opines that the 5,000 young men concentrated at Cambridge would do more work and not less if they were segregated upon 5,000 separate islands. What is work in the objective sense? The young men are busily engaged in overcoming the scarcity of conversation, of amusement, of athletic performance and of pinnacles adorned with chamber utensils, and in the strict economic sense this is all in the day's work. These issues become extremely important when the concepts of optima are applied to the results of work, namely output.

Professor Pigou for the purpose of his analysis has occasion to rule out buyers' preferences for individual sellers as a factor in determining optima, but he does not deal specifically with what may be called producer-preference. Is the satisfaction obtained by a person from his independence in production part of his output? Some of the disciples of positive economics have not hesitated to support schemes for the compulsory reduction of the number of independent entrepreneurs, in shop-keeping for example, on the grounds that a closer approach to the optimum output would be obtained. What does output include and what does it exclude? It is to be feared that in the passage to the real world to which Professor Pigou points in his last chapter the substance of positive economics dissolves and only a technique for the analysis of inter-relations is left. Of that technique Professor Pigou is a master, and this age of piecemeal intervention is in dire need of such teaching. The reader must not expect a modern work on economics to flow with the scriptural ease of the early classics on political economy. The old writers were all along confidently applying criteria which economists now recognise were drawn from outside the realm of the science.

G. L. SCHWARTZ

THE SHORT LIFE

Great Lives: Dr. Johnson, by S. C. ROBERTS; **Cobden,** by IAN BOWEN; **Wolsey,** by ASHLEY SAMPSON; **Charles Edward,** by CAROLA OMAN; **Gordon,** by BERNARD M. ALLEN. *Duckworth.* 2s. each.

With Dr. Johnson the Great Lives series reaches its fiftieth number. This is a convenient point at which to ask a question or two as to the purpose and method of the short biography. Is there any set of rules that could be applied to the writing of biography in brief? These five specimens should furnish a partial answer.

Mr. S. C. Roberts is described by the publisher as a leading authority on Johnson. He may well be that without having mastered the technique of the short life. Mr. Roberts deals in detail. He goes over the well-known story, tracking Johnson in his London homes and his holiday tours, retelling the familiar anecdotes, and even making extracts from the deadest of Johnson's writings. Here, plainly, is a method of summarising the career and contribution of a great man for which there is little to be said. Mr. Bowen's method enables him to do better with Cobden, but the result is not very good. Cobden was a remarkable citizen, a representative man. Mr. Bowen does little to reveal the influences that shaped him, nor is the reader, who to-day may be assumed to know almost nothing of the Anti-Corn-Law movement, helped much towards an understanding of Cobden's singular success as agitator and commercial statesman. Mr. Sampson has a first-rate subject in Wolsey. The ground-plan of his book is good and he has done a skilful piece of historical compression. For Wolsey's character he has next to no admiration, and no one could think less of Wolsey as churchman. Miss Oman's study of the Young Pretender is excellent. Charles

Edward enjoyed one flash of glory in a feckless career of sixty-eight years. Miss Oman does the episode of the Forty-Five in vivid lines, and writing without a touch of the besetting Jacobite insincerity, makes all the rest of it thoroughly readable. And to Mr. Bernard Allen belongs nothing but praise. As author of a definitive book on Gordon he knows the entire record. His little book is exactly what it should be—right in substance, proportion, and tone; a model short biography.

The question of editorial supervision in connection with a series of this kind has some interest. Evidently the editor of *Great Lives* has so far assumed a minimum of responsibility. He does not revise his contributors' bad sentences. He allows them again and again to make nonsensical statements—as, for instance, Mr. Sampson, that Wolsey "was born into the artisan class, and his father was probably a butcher of the superior kind"! Mr. Allen needed no editor, but the others would have been better for a rigorous trimming.

SHORTER NOTICES

The Little Book About God. By LAUREN FORD. *Heinemann.* 5s.

The orthodox but somewhat arch text of this American children's book describes the Creation, the Fall, the Flood and the Nativity. The coloured illustrations have the charm of sophisticated naïvety and are really very pretty. At the price this is a most remarkable piece of book-production, and will probably sell in thousands before Christmas.

English Glass. By W. A. THORPE. *Black.* 7s. 6d.

Mr. Thorpe's study of English glass is the latest addition to the publisher's "Library of English Art" and has all the values of its predecessors in the series. It has, moreover, a quality unusual in such a work, raciness. This is partly due to Mr. Thorpe's effective use of the vernacular which gives his discussion of technique and taste an immediate appeal. When we are told that Roman collectors "fell for" certain meretricious products made for the Roman market by Syrian artificers, or of the Jutish matron in Kent regretting the "fine shops" on the Rhine, or that the claws on the claw-beakers were a "sales trick" we are taken at once out of the museum into a real world. Yet for all his occupation with the trade side of the development of English glass and his pithiness of expression Mr. Thorpe is austere and learned and technical enough when it comes to the description of a method, a period or a style; at times perhaps a shade too technical, though this is a good fault. The book covers a wide range; opening with the glass vessels imported into Roman Britain, and those brought with them by the Germanic invaders, made for them by Syrian workers in the Seine-Rhine region, and closing with glass products of the present day. In all ages Mr. Thorpe insists again and again on the influence of the customer on the forms assumed by the glass vessels in use. The book is beautifully illustrated.

Looking Down the Years. By RAYMOND BLATHWAYT. *Allen and Unwin.* 12s. 6d.

Although not the originator of the interview as an outstanding feature of modern journalism, Mr. Blathwayt must share with W. T. Stead the credit of popularising it; indeed for many years he was the best-known interviewer of his time. This work, combined with his family relationships and his own genius for friendship, brought him into personal touch with so many of his distinguished contemporaries that nothing autobiographical from his pen can fail to interest. Though old and for the past twelve years confined to his bed with rheumatoid arthritis, he has brought to this casual story of his life a gaiety and good humour that make it most agreeable reading. Apart from its character sketches and its notes on the changes, social and political, of the past sixty years, the book contains a sufficient number of good stories well told to set up an after-dinner speaker for life.

GRAMOPHONE NOTES

THE Dog Days, usually so unfriendly to gramophone records, have this year brought a miscellaneous bunch, most of which seem either very good or definitely bad. Two modern works claim priority of mention—the *Overture to a Picaresque Comedy*, by Arnold Bax, played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Hamilton Harty (Col. LX394), and the *Hary Janos Suite* of Zoltan Kodaly, played by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy (H.M.V. DB2456–8). The first of these works will, I have every hope, inaugurate a whole series of Bax recordings. He is one of the best composers we have, and has so far been badly neglected by the recording companies. This slight but delicious work, which is of comparatively recent date, should please all discriminating music-lovers; it is gay, harmonically sensitive, vibrant with vitality, and particularly rich in melodic invention. If the sponsors of the Russian Ballet had any gumption, they would commission a ballet from Bax, whose genius, with its strong rhythmic variety and Delian sumptuousness, would provide a most welcome change from the jejune inanities of composers like Dukelsky and Rieti. The performance is admirable.

The Kodaly is music of a kindred nature, though its Hungarian nationality may superficially obscure the similarity. Kodaly is one of the best composers alive, and his inventive faculty is every bit as lively as that of Bax. This suite is full of humour, lyrical beauty (especially in the lovely "Song") and descriptive ingenuity. The orchestral score, which is brilliant in the extreme, is done full justice to in the recording. Both of these works are of the kind familiarity with which breeds affection.

The orchestral version of Bach's great *D minor Toccata and Fugue*, by "Klenowsky," played by the Queen's Hall Orchestra and conducted by Sir Henry Wood (Klenowsky), is, I cannot help thinking, a very nasty piece of work. Not that Stokowski's was much better. It may be possible to do this kind of thing well (Schönberg and Elgar have done it successfully on occasion); but discretion is the better part of this form of valour, and Klenowsky's version is conspicuously vulgar and heavy. A gratuitous record (Decca K768).

Chamber music is represented chiefly by Dvorak's *Dumky Trio*, played by the Elly Ney Trio (Decca LY6109–12). At the risk of appearing ungracious, I must admit that I wish they had chosen any other work by Dvorak. The *Dumky Trio* is very famous, but I have never been able to make out why this should be so. Thematically, it is monotonous and dull; the construction is nerveless and irritating, recalling the inadmissible first movement of the César Franck *String Quartet*, with its clumsy alternation between *lento* and *allegro*. Moreover, the violin-playing is, on this occasion, inadequate, which is the more unfortunate because the pianist, Miss Ney, is brilliant. Better worth acquiring is a recording, by Iturbi, of Albeniz's *Sevillana* and Granados's *Goyescas No.* 4 (H.M.V. DB2154). Iturbi is a pianist with an exquisite touch, which is particularly well shown in the first of these two charming pieces. The definition and pedalling are a joy to listen to.

Vocal records are much in evidence this month. Let us dispose of the least satisfactory to begin with. Georges Thill has a superb tenor voice, but French methods of recording, always so myster-

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iously bad, have placed it far too near the microphone, with the result that his singing of " Inutiles regrets," from Berlioz's *Les Troyens à Carthage*, sounds horribly harsh and shrill. The distortion, particularly at the end of the second side, is so fearful that I cannot believe the record would survive more than a few playings, especially with the steel needle that has to be used. The aria itself has the rather chilly beauty of a picture by David. The brass ornamentation of Empire furniture is here given rather more than its value.

Schumann's *Schöne Fremde*, *In der Fremde*, *Geisternähe*, and *Meine Rose*, are admirably, if rather thinly, sung by Ria Ginster (H.M.V. DB2482). *Meine Rose* is the best, as it is also the longest, of these songs; but they are none of them very interesting or characteristic of their composer at his best. They might equally well be by some inferior contemporary—Goetz, for instance. Elizabeth Schumann (not to be confused with the composer) gives a lovely rendering of two English traditional songs, *My lovely Celia* and *Pastorale*. This " milk-maid " voice never fails in its appeal and is peculiarly suited to these songs, the accompaniment of which, however, is over-titivated. Miss Schumann is one of the few living singers who can perform a true, as opposed to a pseudo, shake.

Lensky's Aria, from Tchaikovsky's *Eugen Onegin*, has always been one of my favourite songs, and I take this opportunity of warmly recommending the new recording of it, by Charles Kullman, with orchestral accompaniment (Col. LX396). Herr Kullman has a mellow and charming voice which does full justice to the lyrical sadness of this lovely song. On the obverse is Vladimir's Aria from Borodin's *Prince Igor*, in which the marvellously expressive recitative at once strikes the listener. This genius for beautifully flexible recitative is a notable characteristic of the nineteenth century Russian opera-composers (Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Borodin, Dargomijsky), and is especially remarkable when compared with the dull and rigid technique of French composers like Massenet.

Heinrich Rehkemper, a singer of beautiful taste, gives an admirable rendering of " Colomba, o Tortorella " and " Papagena, Papagena," from Mozart's *Magic Flute* (Decca CA8203). His phrasing is perfect.

Dance Music. Cole-Porter's *Anything Goes* continues to receive attention; this month's recordings, made by the Palace Theatre artistes and orchestra (Col. DX697–8), seem to me the best of all, so far. *You're the Top* is at last given with all the original words, together with a good many extra " English " verses, which, however, add nothing to the humour. *Chasing Shadows*, played by the Dorsey Brothers (Brunswick RL255), is quite a pretty tune, and *I'll Never Say " Never Again " Again* should be good for dancing. Greta Keller, that admirable cabaret artist, contributes this month's quota of S.A. in *Call Me Sweetheart* (Decca F5595); but the obverse contains a song which has only sociological interest. It is called *In a Little Gypsy Tea-room*, and is a capital argument against Ribbon Development. Get it and laugh—if you can—at its grisly exposition of the wish-fulfilment of Strube's Little Man—the unbelievably stuffy, almost sub-human sentiment of the pure suburban mentality.

To those whom it may concern, I recommend the *Aldershot Tattoo Medley*, performed by the Massed Bands of the Aldershot Command (H.M.V. C2768–9). This record pleasantly reminded me of a phonograph cylinder I used to possess in my childhood, called " The Departure of the Troopship." Bells rang, a distant band played suitable tunes, voices called " Goo' bye, ole man ! " a nostalgic siren-shriek receded gradually into the distance. . . . A mechanism for stimulating the lachrymatory glands.

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

Week-end Competitions

No. 284

Set by Norman Collins

We offer a First Prize of Two Guineas and Second Prize of Half a Guinea for a poem or piece of doggerel in any metre, suitable for chanting at the wheel, to keep the forgetful motorist constantly in mind of the major points of the Road Code, the whole to run to not more than 20 lines, and brevity to be considered as one of the criteria.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Friday, August 30th.
2. Competitors may use a pseudonym. Typescript is not insisted on, but writing must be on one side of the paper only.
3. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.
4. No competitor is eligible for more than one prize in any one week.

The result of last week's competition will be announced in our next issue.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 282

Set by V. S. Pritchett

The problem of making the punishment fit the crime has occupied the minds of reformers, satirists, Utopians, psychologists, and officials since the days of Elizabeth Fry. Officially the difficulty has been solved blanket fashion by imposing sentences of imprisonment, or fines, for most breaches of the law, great or small; but there was a time—and why should it not come again?—when the prisoner might at least expect a little variety. There were the pillory and the stocks; there was the press gang. Must humanitarianism lead to monotony? Samuel Butler wanted our criminals to go to hospital. There has been a suggestion that some offenders should be publicly floodlit —but I believe this was for political ineptitude. I therefore invite proposals—which must not be wantonly frivolous, and, if satirical, must have an arguable aptness—for punishments fitting to the following crimes and misdemeanours. Satire is not essential. I hope also for serious originality.

(1) Fraud. (2) Blackmail. (3) Manslaughter (motoring). (4) Breach of Promise. (5) Soliciting. (6) Selling drink after hours. (7) Perjury. (8) Street Betting offences. (9) Seducing His Majesty's Forces. (10) Riot (political). (11) Assault.

Competitors are free to apply themselves to any special category of these crimes. We offer a First Prize of Two Guineas and a Second Prize of Half a Guinea for the best entries.

Report by V. S. Pritchett

If this competition has done nothing else it has enabled readers to get off their chests a great deal of rage which might otherwise have found

Vive le Sport !

In a topsy-turvy world, where the only exercise of twenty million people is to watch four men playing tennis, or twenty-two men playing cricket, or thirty men playing rugger, it is not surprising that so many are exhausted if they run ten yards to catch a bus.

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COLISEUM.	**Gay Deceivers.**	Wed., Sat.
DRURY LANE.	**Glamorous Night.**	W. & S.
DUCHESS.	**Night Must Fall.**	Wed., Sat.
LYRIC.	**Tovarich.**	Wed., Thurs.
QUEEN'S.	**Wind & the Rain.**	Wed. & Sat.
S.MARTIN'S.	**The Two Mrs. Carrolls.**	Tu.,F.
STRAND.	**1066 and All That.**	Tu. & Thurs.
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its way eventually to the correspondence columns of this paper. One thing that has always struck me in these competitions is the number of reactionaries who secretly read THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION. Nothing brings them out of hiding more thoroughly than a competition which invites them to think out punishments for their neighbours. Of course, I know this particular competition inevitably encouraged a light-hearted sadism. Nazi Jew-baiting punishments were very popular, such as placarding the manslaughtering motorist, tattooing the blackmailer, making the perjurer wear a notice saying " I am a liar," etc. Publicity, indeed, was thought to be the most effective punishment for crime. The best suggested punishment for fraud was perhaps to put the person on the dole for the rest of his life. The best example of the " Erewhon " manner (unhappily almost non-existent) was " Simple Sailor's " prison for the blackmailee. I was astonished by the sternness competitors showed to breach of promise and soliciting. Street betting got off very lightly and a great many people thought that a publican who had been obliged to give away drink free for a day or two would cease to sell it after hours. There was an almost unanimous desire to send seducers of His Majesty's Forces into the army, though one genial sadist had the original idea of making the offender give 5,000 blank leaflets to soldiers. An even darker soul suggested that the offender should listen to Lady Houston singing patriotic songs of her own composition. R. Thoresby had rather violent ideas and other amusing replies came from Violet Hoare, Scholastikos, D. Willoughby, John Rotton, Brian Robb and James Hall. The latter made the unique suggestion that blackmailers should " walk " their sentence. How to come to any final conclusion was extraordinarily difficult as nobody really had a completely good list. I would have liked to publish at least half a dozen. James Hall, T. Naisby, " Seven " and " Simple Sailor " were reluctantly eliminated with the usual sense of gross injustice and D. Willoughby is left with the first prize and Brian Robb, because I liked his first punishment immensely, has the second. The law of libel obliged me to delete the name of the paper he puts in his second paragraph.

FIRST PRIZE

1. *FRAUD.* Confiscation of property. 1–10 years' compulsory poverty.
2. *BLACKMAIL.* Face dyeing with indelible ink (blue or green), 1–2 years.
3. *MANSLAUGHTER.* One hour's crawling on hands and knees against West-end rush hour traffic. 1–6 months.
4. *BREACH OF PROMISE.* Defendant to be manacled to successful plaintiff. 1–6 months.
5. *SOLICITING.* Large photograph of defendant with name and address to be exhibited in daily press.
6. *SELLING DRINKS AFTER HOURS.* Limited stock of liquor. Two-thirds average daily consumption. 1–3 months.
7. *PERJURY.* Enforced labour for public scavenging, etc. Max. 2 years.
8. *STREET BETTING OFFENCES.* Compulsory daily attendance, 10–5, at Art Galleries or Museums.
9. *SEDUCING HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES.* Deportation to Abyssinia, or to Germany disguised as non-Aryan.
10. *RIOT* (POLITICAL). Compulsory instruction in Political Philosophy at the London School of Economics. Discharge on passing examination (Honours standard).
11. *ASSAULT.* Compulsory wearing of remarkably absurd clothes. Max. 6 months.

P.S.—Breach of Promise is a tort, not a criminal offence.

D. WILLOUGHBY

SECOND PRIZE

1. The prisoner convicted of Fraud should be bled.
2. The prisoner convicted of Blackmail should be made editor of —— for a period varying from one to six years according to the gravity of the offence.
3. The prisoner convicted of Manslaughter should be painfully lashed to the foremost part of his motor-car, and recklessly driven by drunkards, in the case of a first offence through such comparatively quiet ways as Queen's Gate, but in extreme cases through Piccadilly.
4. The prisoner convicted of the crime of Breach of Promise should be publicly and embarrassingly forgiven.
5. The prisoner convicted of Soliciting should be irritated as the fancy suggests.
6. The prisoner convicted of selling drinks after hours should be torn to shreds or smothered with good advice.
7. The perjurer should receive one sentence, and suffer another, better or worse, according to the intention of the perjury. The sentences would range from the comparatively light one of burning alive by boy scouts in Hyde Park, to the very severe one of being read to aloud out of *Punch.*
8. The man convicted of Street Betting offences should be led blindfold to the centre of Hampton Court maze and made to find his own way out. Livid policemen would be stationed in every blind alley.
9. The man convicted of seducing His Majesty's Forces should be enlisted, his rank ranging, according to the gravity of his offence, from private in a mild case, to major-general in a bad one. Extreme cases would be retired and condemned to imprisonment in a military club for life.
10. The political rioter should be lashed to the Nelson Column and converted to Theosophy. The hardened criminal should be secured to the bar of the House of Commons.
11. The prisoner convicted of Assault should be psycho-analysed.

BRIAN ROBB

CALIBAN'S PROBLEM CONTEST

PROBLEM 139.—ROBINSON'S RENDEZVOUS

(Mr. A. G. Stripp's favourite composition. But there will be a special bonus of 12 points for anyone who solves it !).

Some weeks ago I went for a few days' walking tour in the country with my friend Robinson. We had fixed the day and time at which we were to meet, but I had left it to him to select the place from which we were to start, the arrangement being that he should write and tell me, and that I should meet him there.

A day or two before we were due to set out, I had the following very curious message from him :—

" Now as you have to resolve these most unusual coded lines, do not use the given words. Above all, try to spot a number. Do as the digits assign, locating a set of tenable letters outweighing any scruple if giving a verse instead. Thus by craft we are going to meet. It is here the year reveals how the digits are chosen. Lucidity comes into chaos when you unravel a clue. The day is a unit, and years may very easily be providing you this unit. Group rightly; map and cyclopedia will soon show the next step. This thesis is unique, you really perceive."

Now both Robinson and I are rather keen on solving puzzles, secret ciphers, and that sort of thing ; and I guessed that hidden in this otherwise incomprehensible message in some way was the clue to our meeting-place. Some sort of key seemed to be indicated in these vague references to days and years and to a number and its digits. At first I could make nothing of it ; but presently I hit on an idea which certainly produced a verse, and then I felt sure that I must be on the right track. I had to look at the map of England, and to turn up another reference or two. And when, the night before we were to start, Robinson rang me up on the telephone and said " To-morrow we'll be on the way," that proved my conclusion correct, for Robinson loves to have his little joke.

The next morning I caught the 10.4 from Waterloo.

What was my destination ?

Caliban is on holiday until next week. The solutions of Problems 136, 137, and awards 135, 136 will stand over until Caliban's return.

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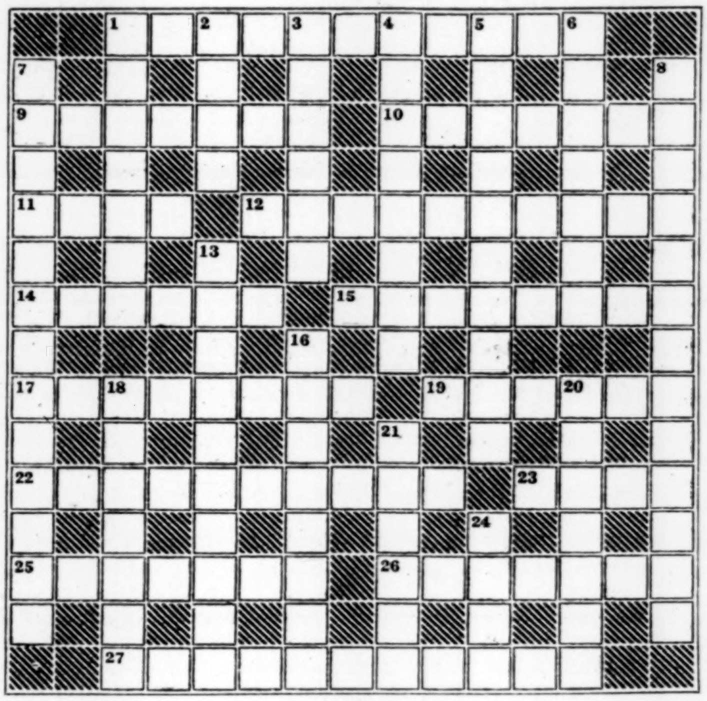
WEEK-END CROSSWORD 285

The sender of the first correct solution to be opened may choose as prize a copy of either *This England* or *The Playtime Omnibus*. Envelopes should be addressed to "CROSSWORDS," 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1, and must arrive not later than first post next Wednesday. Prize-winners should address their claims to the Editor.



Set by L.-S.

The last week's winner is
Douglas Birt, Leconfield Rectory, Beverley, Yorks.

ACROSS

1. It smooths the way publicly.
9. "Kamerad" was the proper reply to this 20 years ago.
10. The model has a short test to begin with.
11. In wartime it often went on air.
12. Destructive name for the man who marries a widow.
14. Revealing way to treat an umbrella when it is needed.
15. "Curs of low degree."
17. Game description of the Duchess of Richmond's dance before the battle of Waterloo.
19. A forefatherly relation.
22. Sounds like the coat the moth got at.
23. A heartless scout comes to a rabbity end.
25. Hedger for the millinery department.
26. Ma's hoop goes on the head.
27. You can't take a long pull at these.

DOWN

1. 5 a.m. to-day.
2. Oriental form of seat.
3. Drawn for Atlas.
4. Free Trade policy for hot weather.
5. Spring time for trees when school is done.
6. It would easily repel us.
7. Almost windless.
8. No doubt what one of Janus's heads was engaged in.
13. This idol was not the elephant's god.
16. This pest's first is the colour of his second reversed.
18. You find me in the big shops.
20. Receives in a gifted manner.
21. This will reseat the eaters.
24. Such ado for a doctor.

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

C	H	E	C	K	S	■	S	C	R	A	P	P	E	D
O	■	S	■	A	■	T	■	A	■	L	■	A	■	E
H	A	P	O	R	T	H	■	R	U	S	T	L	E	R
A	■	O	■	A	■	E	■	P	■	A	■	E	■	I
B	L	U	E	C	A	P	■	E	N	T	E	R	E	D
I	■	S	■	H	■	O	■	T	■	I	■	M	■	E
T	H	E	S	I	L	L	Y	S	E	A	S	O	N	■
S	■	■	■	■	■	I	■	W	■	■	■	■	■	E
■	R	O	A	S	T	C	H	E	S	T	N	U	T	S
S	■	R	■	T	■	E	■	E	■	H	■	N	■	T
C	A	I	T	I	F	F	■	P	R	E	M	I	E	R
O	■	F	■	C	■	O	■	E	■	A	■	C	■	A
F	L	I	C	K	E	R	■	R	A	T	T	O	O	N
F	■	C	■	I	■	C	■	S	■	R	■	R	■	G
S	H	E	A	T	H	E	D	■	S	E	A	N	C	E

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THE WEEK IN THE CITY

BY TOREADOR

LIQUIDATIONS IN TOP-HEAVY INDUSTRIALS—ZINC CORPORATION—OVER-VALUED ELECTRICITY SUPPLY SHARES—SILVER

THE broad hint to sell industrial shares given in these columns last week was, I hope, taken by all but the "vulgar and inconsiderate" reader who aroused the comment. The selling began on Friday last and continued spasmodically this week. It was interesting to observe that the liquidation actually increased the more the financial press generally advised against selling. The City Editor who argued that there was no reason why investors should sell securities in the event of war breaking out between Italy and Abyssinia—"Italian securities," said this Olympian, "alone would fall"—lost sight of the fact that after a five months' unbroken rise British industrial shares, on the average, had become over-valued. When a market is due for a reaction it is usually some outside or even irrelevant event which gives the signal for selling. In this case, as I suggested last week, the situation abroad was dangerous enough to warrant the investor taking some of his profits. But, war or no war, it seems unreasonable to value British industrial shares to yield only 4 per cent. or less on *estimated* dividends. The following are examples:

	Price.	Estimated Dividend.	Gross Yield % on Est. Div.
British Match	39/-	6 net	£3 19 3
Cerebos	10 11/16	40	£3 15 0
Courtaulds	55/7½	7½ net	£3 9 9
Dunlop	42/-	8	£3 16 3

Where industrial shares have fallen to prices which afford yields of 4½ per cent. and over on estimated dividends, they may be worth keeping. But not otherwise—unless they are concerned with the industries making munitions of war.

* * *

Pacifist investors will have to give up investing. It is practically impossible to buy any industrial equity share which is not benefiting in some way, directly or indirectly, from the warlike activities of the great or minor Powers. Chemicals, oil, metals, iron and steel, shipbuilding, are only a few of the trades which are deriving benefit from the rearmament of Britain and the coming war in Abyssinia. Lead, for example, is enjoying a beautiful rise. English lead is now quoted at £18 per ton as compared with £12½ in January last. Now lead helps to build happy homes as well as fill the military cemeteries, and it would be difficult to apportion the increase in consumption between the building trades and the War Offices. The recent strength of demand however, is almost certainly warlike, for the domestic consumers buy quietly through their cartel. The statistical position of the metal is satisfactory. Consumption is about 15 per cent. or more above the level of 1934 while production, which is under amicable control, is practically unchanged. An interest in lead can be obtained by buying Zinc Corporation preference or ordinary shares. This Company's mining revenue last year was derived as follows:

49,254 tons lead at £11 1*s*.	£534,257
991,685 oz. silver at 1.11*d*.	94,210
24,696 tons zinc at £13 15*s*. 6*d*.	340,187
Total estimated value of 1934 mine production ..	£978,654

It seems likely that the revenue from lead will be almost 50 per cent. greater this year. The company's revenue from miscellaneous investments amounted to £65,000 in 1934, and among its investments are holdings in Australian gold and lead mines

* * *

The "bulls" of Zinc Corporation shares were encouraged by Sir Robert Horne's statement at the shareholders' meeting:

> If the current level of metal values is maintained our profits and our dividends for the current year will show a very satisfactory increase. On the basis of our profits up to date—if nothing untoward happens—our next dividend will certainly be substantially better than the corresponding distribution a year ago.

The distribution of the Zinc Corporation profits is as follows. The preference shares of £1 are entitled to a cumulative dividend of 20 per cent. and share in the remaining profits rateably with the ordinary shares of 10/-, which rank as fully paid shares of £1 for this purpose. If the ordinary dividend is to be 35 per cent., as the market estimates, the preference shares will get 37½ per cent. If 40 per cent. the preference shares will get 40 per cent. Above 40 per cent. the preference shares will get less than the ordinary. The present market prices and yields are as follows:

	Price.	Yield % on last Year's Divs.	Yield on Est. Dividends.
Ordinary 10/- shs. ..	39/-	£3 17 0 on 15%	£8 19 6 on 35% £10 5 0 on 40%
Preference £1 ..	£5½	£5 0 0 on 27½%	£6 16 3 on 37½% £7 5 6 on 40%

The preference shares are a narrow market but are the less risky way of participating in the lead boom.

* * *

Plenty of over-valued shares are to be found in the electricity supply market. Insurance companies love to buy electricity supply shares, because they regard them as riskless equities affording a yield slightly above that obtainable in the gilt-edged market. Why the risk factor should be ignored is beyond my comprehension. Eventually, the distribution of electricity will have to be nationalised. Already the National Government is taking action along radical lines. The Minister of Transport announced last month that, following upon the co-ordination of the generation of electricity through the Central Electricity Board (created by a Conservative Government), a Committee had been appointed consisting of Sir Harry McGowan, Chairman of Imperial Chemical Industries, Sir John Snell and Mr. John Morrison, a partner of Thomson McClintock, chartered accountants, to review (*a*) the organisation of the distribution of electricity in Great Britain, and (*b*) the control of statutory electricity companies by other companies. The Committee is to advise on how distribution facilities can be extended, particularly in rural areas, how costs can be reduced, how charges can be standardised, and so on. As the Committee has no electricity member it should make a fearless report. Clearly, if the Central Electricity Board is to be made a success—and the Conservative-National Government regards this as a matter of prestige—the national consumption of electricity will have to be vastly increased, which implies that electricity charges will have to be lowered in the agricultural and less densely populated areas. That certain supply companies operating in thickly populated and industrialised centres should be allowed to make inordinate profits, while others operating in agricultural areas have to charge high rates in order to make ends meet, is indefensible. Whether or no this business-like Committee should be regarded as a "risk factor" in the electricity supply market, the following shares seem to me over-valued:

	Price.	Dividend %	Gross Dividend Yield %
County of London Electric	59/-	10½	£3 11 0
Hendon Electric Supply	55/6	7¾ net	£3 12 0
Lancashire Electric Light and Power	39/-	7½	£3 17 0
North Metropolitan Electric ..	60/3	10	£3 6 3
Scottish Power	43/6	8	£3 13 6
Yorkshire Electric Power	45/6	8	£3 10 3

* * *

The impression is gaining ground that the American Government has promised the British Treasury to moderate its silver-buying policy. The root of the understanding is an agreement between the two Powers to pursue a common policy in China in opposition to the commercial penetration of Japan. The Far East mission of Sir Frederick Leith-Ross may therefore be followed by some form of Anglo-American financial help for China. First aid would naturally have to begin with silver, for the rise in the price of silver is killing the Chinese export trade. The American Government is bound by the Silver Purchase Act to go on buying silver until its monetary stocks are in the gold-silver ratio of 3 : 1, but there is no reason why it should do so at continually rising prices in the world market. The London spot price has recently fallen from 30 3/16d. per ounce to 29d. and the forward price to 28 9/16. Naturally the American Treasury wishes to avoid a disorderly decline, and on one day last week when speculators were busy unloading it actually bought 25,200,000 ounces (about six months' American production). But it seems that it has determined to let the world price gradually fall so as to ease the Chinese burden.

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*

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Company Meeting

COVENT GARDEN PROPERTIES.

The eleventh ordinary general meeting of Covent Garden Properties Company Ltd., was held on August 15th in London.

Mr. Philip E. Hill (the chairman) said (in part): The profits for the year (before providing for directors' fees, taxation and debenture interest) amount to £242,039. The income from rents, tolls and interest on investments is £211,277, an increase of £27,868 compared with that of last year, while the profits on sales of investments amount to £30,763, a decrease of £41,857. This reduction is due to the fact that the realisation of investments during the period was practically negligible, although current quotations for the company's holdings are higher than book value. Profits on sales of properties, on the other hand, are slightly in excess of those of last year. The sales of properties during the year amounted to £280,000 and the purchases to £299,393.

The company's revenue from properties continues to increase, but the policy of the Board has been to let this take a natural course and not to attempt to expedite it by offering temporary reduction in rents.

During the year the directors had realised approximately £280,000 of freehold ground rents at a satisfactory price. The proceeds have been reinvested, mainly in freeholds which will produce a larger return. The company's investments of approximately £400,000 consist almost entirely of shares in property companies, our largest holdings being in the Second Covent Garden Property Company, which is doing well, and in two other property companies with which we are closely associated, and satisfactory returns are being received from these.

The loan from the company's bankers has been increased to £350,000 odd. The company has cash in the hands of the debenture stock trustees to the extent of about £112,000. The increase in the bank loan has been occasioned by further investments of the company, principally in the Second Covent Garden Property Company.

On the 1st January next the company proposes to redeem the outstanding £1,000,000 Five per Cent. First Mortgage debenture stock at 102½ per cent., and the Board has under consideration at a later date the question of asking the Preference shareholders' permission to convert the balance of £500,000 loan capital into debenture stock, to be issued as and when required by the company.

A survey of the company's properties indicates further substantial increases in our fixed revenue for some years to come, and the directors are of opinion that a part of this may be reasonably expected in the current year. The report and accounts were unanimously adopted.

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STILL another point of Barneys betterment . . . all ✶Barneys strengths are now available in "Ready-Fills" as well as in the original packings. John Sinclair's "Ready-Fills" save time and effort and help to *increase* the joy of pipe-smoking. You just slip one of the "Ready-Fills" *complete* into the bowl—and you have a better, more uniform "fill" than you get in the ordinary way.

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In three strengths: Barneys is *medium*, Punchbowle *full*, and Parsons Pleasure *mild*.

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In 1 oz. "LEADS" and 2 oz. & 4 oz. "EVERFRESH" Tins: 10½d. the ounce. "READY-FILLS" in Cartons of 12: 10½d.

(209) Made by John Sinclair Ltd., Newcastle-on-Tyne.